



Avenue Middle School, Norwich

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 120928
LEA NORFOLK LEA
Inspection number 280918
Inspection dates 19 September 2005 to 20 September 2005
Reporting inspector Mr. John Messer LI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Avenue Road
School category	Community		NR2 3HP
Age range of pupils	8 to 12		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01603 441034
Number on roll	375	Fax number	01603 441035
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs.Kay Day
Date of previous inspection	15 January 2001	Headteacher	. Juris Zarins

Age group 8 to 12	Inspection dates 19 September 2005 - 20 September 2005	Inspection number 280918
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by a team of three Additional Inspectors supported by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large school on the outskirts of the city of Norwich. Pupils are taught in twelve classes in a Victorian building. Pupils enter the school with standards that are above average. There is a lower than average proportion of children who have learning difficulties and disabilities. Most pupils come from white English-speaking families. Around seventeen per cent are from minority ethnic backgrounds. A small number speak English as an additional language but none is at an early stage of speaking English. This middle school is subject to agreed re-organisation arrangements and is due to become a junior school in 2007.

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 that provides pupils with an effective education. The school's own findings match this judgement. Most pupils make good progress. Pupils attain standards that are above average in English, mathematics and science. Standards in music are high. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The curriculum is good and there is a strong emphasis on teaching the key skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. Pupils enjoy most of the learning opportunities provided but say that a few lessons are not very interesting. Parents are happy with many aspects of the school but a significant number feel that the partnership between home and school to support children's learning could be improved. Pupils are well behaved and relationships are good. Those with learning difficulties and disabilities are supported well and make good progress. Governors work well with the headteacher and staff. Together they provide good leadership and management. The school gives good value for money. It analyses its performance thoroughly and takes action to improve any areas of weakness. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. It has good capacity to make further improvements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make sure that all lessons are as interesting as possible and stimulate pupils' enthusiasm for learning. - Review the ways in which the school communicates with parents and strengthen the partnership between home and school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils enter the school at the beginning of Year 4 with standards in reading, writing and mathematics that are above average. Pupils make good progress and attain standards that are significantly above average in English, mathematics and science. Pupils have clear and appropriately challenging targets to help them move through the stages of the National Curriculum. All groups, including those with special educational needs, achieve equally well. Many pupils play instruments and the performance of the school orchestra and choirs is of high quality. Pupils develop a wide range of skills in information and communication technology. They are articulate and express their views well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good. When they join the school most are well behaved and mature for their age. The school builds well on these firm foundations in all age groups. Pupils enjoy their education, behave well and establish good relationships with other children and with adults. Older pupils set a good example to younger ones. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. This is a result of both

the good attitudes to learning that pupils bring from home and the opportunities provided by the school. For instance, pupils appreciate the way that the school council acts to represent their views and how it has brought about improvements, such as introducing playground monitors. The school ensures that pupils work safely. Lessons effectively promote an understanding of healthy lifestyles, including the importance of a good diet and attention to exercise. Many pupils would now like to have more access to healthy snacks and meals during the day so that they can put their lessons into practice. The school effectively develops the skills pupils will need as they get older. It teaches the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and computer skills well. It starts to prepare the oldest for the world of work by encouraging enterprises such as the school newspaper and by teaching simple financial skills. Pupils develop good levels of self-confidence. Attendance is above average and punctuality is good.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers work well together in teams to plan lessons for each year group. This promotes consistency between classes. The quality of planning is good and helps pupils to learn new skills systematically in a step by step approach. Teachers keep detailed records of the progress that pupils make and use these well to set targets for further learning. Teachers form good relationships with pupils who settle happily into their new classes at the start of each new school year. Teachers maintain high expectations of pupils' performance and work is challenging. Pupils' skills in numeracy are particularly well developed and most learn to create powerful pieces of writing. They enjoy most lessons and several have begun to write short novels at home. Pupils are keen to learn and behave sensibly in lessons. They answer questions eagerly, are attentive and concentrate well. These positive attitudes help them to make good progress. Teaching assistants are particularly good at supporting the slower learners and those with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a wide and interesting curriculum, including lessons that are in addition to those required by the National Curriculum. However, with greater creativity in curricular planning, a few lessons could be more stimulating. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to learn Spanish in Years 4 and 5 and French from Year 6. Pupils thoroughly enjoy learning new languages. Work in mathematics is improved by grouping pupils in Years 5 to 7 into ability sets. Music is greatly enhanced by visiting specialist music teachers. The curriculum is enriched by special events such as the 'Performing Arts Week'. There is a good range of after-school activities but these are mainly for the older pupils. Through the school council, pupils have requested more after-school activities and have been assured that these will be provided. The school is successful in developing pupils' awareness of safe and healthy living and economic awareness.

Specialists provide pupils with good guidance about drugs awareness, sex education and about how to stay safe. The curriculum offers good opportunities for pupils to become confident and self-assured.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care is good. Children feel secure in the school and have adults to talk to if they are worried. The school increasingly seeks the views of its pupils about how well it is doing. Child protection arrangements are in place and there are satisfactory systems to deal with any accidents or incidents. The governors ensure that risk assessments are carried out well and they regularly check the school's arrangements for ensuring pupils' health and safety. Pupils are confident that the occasional incidents of bullying or racism are dealt with effectively by staff. The school's good target-setting arrangements mean that pupils know what to do to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school's evaluation that leadership and management are good. The headteacher and his deputy work together well to ensure the smooth running of the school. An ethos has been established that encourages all pupils to feel that they are valued members of the school community. It has good plans for further improvement and is well placed to manage the proposed reorganisation and transition to junior school status in 2007. The issues raised in the last report have been tackled successfully. There are now better systems to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning and pupils now have targets that help them to understand how they can reach the next steps in their learning. Subject leaders analyse standards in their areas of responsibility in order to identify where improvements might be made. This has ensured that standards have been maintained at above average levels. They check on the quality of teaching and learning and make suggestions for improvement. However, the next stage, checking that the suggestions have been implemented, is not yet fully established. Governors provide good support and have helped the school to analyse its strengths and weaknesses. A new sports hall to share with three other schools has just been completed following a successful National Lottery bid. The school asks parents and pupils for their views about the quality of education provided. As a result it has identified the need to review and strengthen communication with parents and to involve parents more fully in their children's learning. The building is old and difficult to maintain but there is scope to create a more inviting and stimulating atmosphere. There are serious concerns about the school lavatories and several pupils correctly report that they are smelly and unpleasant. The school is well aware of this problem. The headteacher and governors have tried hard to improve the facilities and they are desperately keen to upgrade the lavatories as a matter of urgency. There have been delays with planned improvements and school refurbishment due to problems with the company managing the project.

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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	2	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 Avenue Middle School is a good school. Most of you enjoy your lessons and make good progress. Your teachers work hard to help you. The teachers and other staff are sensitive to the needs of you all. You enjoy learning and find most of the lessons stimulating but a few are not as interesting as they could be. You are particularly good at reading, writing, mathematics and science. You develop a good range of skills in ICT and many of you are exceptionally good at playing musical instruments. The school choirs and the orchestra perform to a high standard. You are good at expressing your views clearly. We were impressed with your maturity and how sensible you are. You behave well and are considerate to the feelings of others. You are courteous and thoughtful. We know that you want to help the staff to make the school even better. We think that your headteacher gives good leadership and makes sure that everything runs smoothly. The school governors work closely with the staff to plan improvements. They have been successful in building a new sports hall for you to share with other local schools. They have tried very hard to get the lavatories improved but they have met with difficulties with the people who are supposed to be organising the work. The school spends its money sensibly and they have saved up enough to redecorate the building and improve the learning conditions. There are two main things the school needs to do to make it even better. One is to make sure that all lessons are as interesting as they possibly can be so that you become even more enthusiastic about learning. The school tries hard to work with your parents to help you learn effectively but some parents think that communications should be better. Consequently we are asking the school to think hard about how the partnership between the school and your parents could be strengthened. We wish you all every success in the future and feel sure that you, the staff of the school, governors and parents will soon make the school even better.