



Fred Nicholson School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 121256
LEA NORFOLK LEA
Inspection number 280963
Inspection dates 14 June 2006 to 15 June 2006
Reporting inspector Mr. Charlie Henry HMI

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Westfield Road
School category	Community		NR19 1JB
Age range of pupils	7 to 16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01362 693915
Number on roll	94	Fax number	01362 693298
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs. Ingrid Floering Blackman
Date of previous inspection	20 March 2000	Headteacher	Mrs. Alison Kahn

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The Fred Nicholson School is a school for pupils who have a wide range of learning difficulties. Most pupils have moderate learning difficulties, an increasing number have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and some have communication difficulties within the autistic spectrum and sensory difficulties alongside other medical needs. There are twice as many boys as girls and twenty pupils board at the school from Monday to Friday. Almost all pupils are from a White British background. Four pupils are looked after by the local authority. Most pupils are transported to the school by the local authority and attend from a wide area of Norfolk.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The Fred Nicholson School is a satisfactory school. The school over evaluated its effectiveness as good because it does not rigorously evaluate how well pupils are learning. Pupils make satisfactory progress and achievements, given their special educational needs and their levels as they enter the school. There are strengths in the good progress made by pupils at Key Stage 2. This is as a result of good teaching and because information about the progress pupils make is used effectively in planning. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teamwork between staff is good and they make strong relationships with pupils. This enables good progress to be made in pupils' personal development and well-being. Pupils enjoy the interesting activities provided for them; they feel safe and behave well. The quality of care, support and guidance is good. Behaviour management is effective for those pupils who need it. Assessment of how well pupils are doing in the subjects is regularly undertaken, however, assessment of the progress made towards individual education plans (IEPs) targets is not frequent enough. There is not enough use made of the targets set within plans and in the subject areas. The curriculum is good, especially for personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) and the range of extra activities. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The new headteacher has quickly set a clear direction for the school and has already demonstrated improvements, including in the standards of pupils' behaviour. However, information about pupils' progress is not evaluated sufficiently to guide improvement planning and is not used by the governors to monitor the school's effectiveness. Pupils' progress has declined since the last inspection. Accommodation within the boarding provision remains inadequate. The school has a satisfactory capacity for further improvement and provides satisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision

Grade: 3

The boarding provision makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' education. Pupils are cared for and looked after well. There is increasingly effective liaison between care staff and school staff, although more could be done to increase pupils' learning through regular homework. There is a good range of after school activities, especially in sport. There is good communication with parents. The boarding provision within the school was last inspected by the Commission for Care Standards Inspections (CSCI) in February 2006. Please find the report by access to (<http://62.73.173.233/CSCI/RSS/84/DS0000038284.V278064.R01.S.pdf>). Its report judged that most of the National Minimum Standards were being met, with a few areas at commendable levels. The school has plans to address most of the remaining issues within this report. Accommodation within the boarding provision is inadequate and has been identified as such by CSCI in their recent report and in earlier reporting. There is insufficient privacy in the dormitories, although some improvement is planned by the use of curtains. Nevertheless the lounge arrangements and the need for pupils to return to the school dining room for their evening meal and breakfast do not contribute

well to providing as homely an environment as is possible for the further development of personal and social skills. Access to the boarding accommodation is poor for those who have mobility difficulties, especially those who are wheelchair users. The single independence flat may only be used by either boys or girls at any one time, and as such prevents equality of opportunity.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of the boarding provision to meet National Care Standards and provide up to date domestic style accommodation. - Improve the quality of teaching to that of the best by more effective planning and individual pupils' targets. - Raise standards and achievements at Key Stages 3 and 4 by more effectively evaluating and using information about how well pupils are making progress. - Provide appropriate information for governors to more rigorously monitor the school's effectiveness.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

As a result of their learning needs, all pupils enter the school with standards that are well below what is expected for youngsters of their age. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress, given their abilities and starting levels as they enter the school. The school's self-evaluation overestimated the progress pupils make, since it did not rigorously analyse the data it collects about the standards achieved. Pupils at Key Stage 2 make good progress because they are taught well, and information about the progress they are making towards the targets within their IEPs is used effectively in planning for future learning. Pupils in Key Stage 3 and 4 make satisfactory progress and gains across all areas of the curriculum. There is inadequate use of target setting to set high yet realistic expectations, towards which pupils can strive to achieve. Pupils make good gains in work related learning that contribute well to prepare them for when they leave school. Progress towards achieving targets within IEPs is satisfactory. However, many of these targets for older pupils are not sufficiently achievable or used effectively enough in lesson planning. There are no significant differences in the progress made by different groups of pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree that pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils are polite, friendly and supportive to each other. They enjoy school and particularly the enrichment activities that are provided for them. They generally behave well. Those who have social, emotional and behavioural needs make significant progress, particularly in their ability to manage their own behaviour. This is because of the behaviour improvement systems that the school has developed and the very good relationships that staff establish with pupils. Good attention is paid to expecting pupils to take responsibility for their own learning and actions. As a result, pupils are mature in their attitudes to learning and to others as they progress through the school. They know

that they are valued, and this improves their self-esteem. Consequently they persevere more at tasks they find hard. Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The very good links with the community and with international schools and the very strong citizenship programme supports effectively the development of self-awareness and their understanding of others' values and needs. Pupils make a good contribution to the community. The school council works well to represent the views of all pupils. Pupils raise funds for charity and also carry out work in the local community, such as gardening. A very strong programme of personal, social and health education and citizenship helps pupils to satisfactorily adopt healthy and safe lifestyles. Regular praise and celebration of achievements builds pupils' confidence. They are prepared well for college and adult life through work experience and other work related learning activities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Some lessons are good and occasionally they are outstanding. The quality at Key Stage 2 is good. The school's self evaluation overestimated the quality of lessons because it did not pay sufficient attention to how well pupils were learning. The most recent lesson observations undertaken by senior staff more closely match those of inspectors. Teamwork within the staff is a strong feature of the most effective lessons. In these lessons relationships are very good, behaviour management is effective and pupils respond with enthusiasm to the interesting activities planned for them. Pace is brisk and challenges are set to create interest and feelings of success. Questions are used well to check how well pupils have understood the work before moving on to the next stage. While homework is available upon request a more rigorous approach would contribute to further improving learning. At times, in less successful lessons, planning does not take sufficient account of the range of learners within the group and, as a consequence some are not adequately involved and staff do too much for the pupils. In these lessons insufficient attention is also paid to ensuring targets on IEPs are addressed. Staff regularly assess how well pupils are making progress within their different subjects, however assessment of progress towards IEP targets is too infrequent.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good overall and provides pupils throughout the school with wide ranging and enjoyable learning opportunities. This quality has been recognised through a range of national awards, including in art and the environment. Particular strengths are the very good PSHCE programme and the wide range of enrichment activities, including clubs, visits and residential opportunities. PSHCE addresses pupils' needs very well and permeates the whole life of the school, providing pupils with many opportunities for citizenship. Environmental projects and others such as 'Protect me'

help pupils very well to be more self aware and responsible. There are exceptionally good relationships with Connexions, which mean that careers education and work related learning are well addressed. The school works hard to make the curriculum as relevant as possible to pupils and links with other schools and college widen the opportunities available. For example, the Key Stage 4 curriculum has been strengthened through the addition of several vocational and college 'taster' courses and with links with local businesses. There is a good range of residential and other activities, including projects with other schools, that support pupils' achievements, confidence and contribution to the community very well. These include good sporting opportunities through the school's gifted and talented initiatives; these have been used well to support pupils' application of their literacy and numeracy skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support provided by the school is good. A high level of care and concern for children from the moment they enter the school means that even those who have previously had difficulties feel safe to have a go at new experiences. All requirements for safeguarding and ensuring child protection are in place. There are strong relationships between staff and pupils which support learning and personal development well. The school's arrangements for dealing with any incidents of bullying are effective. Children say that they feel safe in the school and they trust their teachers to 'sort out' any difficulties. Health and safety issues are carefully considered and risk assessments, which were an issue at the last inspection, are now satisfactory. Pupils are given clear information about how to improve their work. This helps them take responsibility for their own learning and behaviour. More could be done, however, to involve them in the setting of targets in their IEPs. Behaviour management is good and has been effective in significantly reducing the number of exclusions. The pupil support unit and the careful working together of residential staff, school staff and parents enable pupils to manage their behaviour better. Pupils with additional medical and learning needs are given good additional support and the school works well with visiting teachers, speech and language therapists and other specialists to provide for their needs. Transition planning for when pupils leave school is good. Parents value the work the school does highly and feel that the school helps them to support their children further. They are included well in their children's programmes through copies of IEP targets, newsletters, meetings and informal contacts.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The quality of the leadership and management is satisfactory. There has been a significant change to the management of the school since the last inspection with a new headteacher taking up post in January, following two years of temporary arrangements. The new headteacher, supported by the senior management team, has set a clear direction for the improvement of the school. There is an increasing

understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. However, at the present time self-evaluation is unsatisfactory since, while it accurately identifies some of the areas needing further improvement, it does not rigorously evaluate the progress pupils make and, consequently, overestimates some of its strengths. There are good links with parents, including through a survey of their views, and the school is responsive to any concerns raised. Equality of opportunity is promoted satisfactorily. The governors are supportive of the school and well aware of its developments and the challenges it faces. They visit regularly and each governor has a link with a different aspect of the school, including the subject areas. However, they do not receive or seek adequate information in order for them to monitor the progress pupils make and the school's overall effectiveness. Finance is managed satisfactorily and the budget links well to school improvement priorities. Accommodation is satisfactory, except for the boarding provision. Resources are used appropriately and the school provides satisfactory value for money. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory overall, since although most aspects of the key issues have been addressed, except for the inadequate residential accommodation, the progress made by pupils has declined. However, the new headteacher and senior staff have already demonstrated significant improvements, for example in improving pupils' behaviour. The capacity to improve further is satisfactory.

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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?	3	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	4	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	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	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	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?	3	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?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	4	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	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	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

As you know we recently visited your school to find out how well you are doing. Thank you for looking after us and making us feel so welcome. We really enjoyed our visit and learned a lot about your school. Thank you for telling us about the things you do and how you think your teachers and other staff are helping you to learn. What we liked about your school - the way you enjoy school and are happy - the progress you make in wanting to learn, in trying hard and in your behaviour - the way all staff work so well together to help you learn - the care that all staff take of you - the range of things you are able to learn about - the links the school has with colleges, businesses and other people who help you. What we have asked your school to do now - use more effectively the targets that your teachers set for you to help plan what you do - use the information collected about your progress to help you learn even better - improve the accommodation for those of you who are boarders.