



Northfield Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112685
Local Authority DERBYSHIRE
Inspection number 289373
Inspection dates 4–5 December 2006
Reporting inspector Martin Newell

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

Type of school	Junior	School address	Falcon Road
School category	Community		Dronfield, Dronfield
Age range of pupils	7–11		Derbyshire S18 2ED
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01246 413134
Number on roll (school)	97	Fax number	01246 292313
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Mike Emmens
		Headteacher	Mr J Anderson
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2004		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This smaller than average school serves the area of Dronfield in Derbyshire. All pupils are of White British heritage. Pupils' social and economic backgrounds vary but are broadly average. The school has an average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities, although the percentage of pupils with statements of special educational needs is well above the national average. Children's attainment on entry has seen an upward trend in recent years and is presently above average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school that provides satisfactory value for money and generally has an accurate picture of its overall effectiveness. The school's track record of improvement indicates that it has a satisfactory capacity to improve further.

Pupils' attainment when they start school has got better over recent years and is currently above average. Achievement is satisfactory overall. However, past weaknesses in teaching, although now resolved, have restricted the progress made by some pupils. Although teaching is now satisfactory overall, there is insufficient good teaching to enable pupils to make up lost ground. This good teaching is already evident in the school where expectations are high and investigative and problem solving tasks motivate, challenge and engage pupils in equal measure. However, teaching does not always have this sparkle to help move pupils' learning on at such a cracking pace. The headteacher is determined to raise standards and has introduced good quality procedures for assessing and tracking pupils' progress. However, the marking of pupils' work does not give sharp enough pointers for improvement and pupils themselves are not directly involved enough in the setting and reviewing of their targets.

Pupils' personal development is good because their behaviour is exceptional and their enthusiasm is infectious. They are great ambassadors for the school. The curriculum generally meets pupils' needs and is enhanced by a good range of enrichment opportunities. The school goes the extra-mile to help pupils to lead healthy lifestyles, to keep safe and to make welcome, and much appreciated, contributions to the local community. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory with some strong features. Pupils feel that they have a genuine voice through the well established school council which they say, 'has really made a difference.' Parents and pupils speak highly of the school and many parents were keen to point out that the school is 'caring and welcoming.... and children just love being there.'

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The headteacher has moved the school forward effectively since the last inspection and has put in place strategies to help improve teaching and other aspects of school life. He has secured the commitment of staff, pupils, governors and parents to the need to improve standards but recognises that further improvements are needed if the school is to build on these foundations and achieve lasting success. The senior management team, teachers and governors now have a secure base on which to do this, by improving the rigour with which they tackle any weaknesses, monitor carefully how well the school is doing and evaluate more precisely the effectiveness and impact on standards of all new initiatives.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards, particularly in writing and mathematics, by improving the quality of teaching further so that it consistently challenges pupils, meets their learning needs and ensures good progress.

- Ensure leaders at all levels, including governors, play a rigorous role in monitoring the work and performance of the school and in evaluating and assessing the impact of new initiatives on pupil achievement.
- Ensure pupils know what is needed to improve their work, how to attain at a higher level and play a greater part in setting and reviewing their own targets.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

By the time pupils leave at the end of Year 6, standards and achievement are satisfactory. However, the picture is complex. National test results in 2006 for Year 6 pupils showed that although standards in English, mathematics and science were close to the national average this represented inadequate progress given pupils' attainment when they started school. This was due to weaknesses in teaching at an earlier time that have since been addressed. All pupils, including those with learning difficulties are now making at least satisfactory progress, and pupils in Years 3 and 6 make good progress. There remains, however, an element of underachievement, particularly in Year 5 due to an earlier slow rate of progress. A more rigorous approach to assessment and tracking and the recent introduction of focused intervention strategies are beginning to have a beneficial impact but there is still lost ground to be made up. Challenging targets have been set for Year 6 pupils in 2007, and if reached, will represent satisfactory progress overall for this group of pupils. Whilst science and speaking and listening standards are good, pupils' writing skills and problem solving skills in mathematics are not sufficiently developed.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good and they add much to the life of the school. Pupils' behaviour is excellent; they are courteous and attentive, applaud each other's achievements and go out of their way to make visitors feel welcome. Pupils are adamant that bullying does not happen and their enjoyment and enthusiasm for school is refreshing. Attendance, however, is slightly below but close to the national average. There are real strengths in pupils' moral and social development. Pupils are reflective individuals who show a deep sense of fairness and genuinely look out for one another. Their knowledge of cultural diversity, in contrast, is weaker. Pupils have been carefully taught how to keep safe and that the best way to achieve good health is through eating well and keeping fit. They make telling contributions to the school and local community through, for example, the effectiveness of the school council, the use of playground buddies, fund raising activities and their much welcomed participation in community events. However, their future economic well-being is only satisfactory and depends on the school succeeding in its drive to improve literacy and numeracy skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is improving. It is currently satisfactory with good aspects. Across the school relationships are very good, pupils are managed well and teaching assistants make an important contribution to supporting pupils experiencing difficulties. When teaching is most effective, staff set challenging work that enables pupils to take an active role in their own learning. Teachers set stimulating and motivating problem solving or investigative tasks. In these lessons, pupils enjoy themselves, readily meet the deadlines set and make big strides in their learning. However, teaching at times is not always pitched closely enough to pupils' abilities, does not recognise that pupils' learning styles may differ and relies too much on direct input from the teacher, preventing pupils completing work for themselves. The school has introduced good quality assessment procedures that are beginning to have a greater impact on pupil achievement but recognises that there is inconsistency in the quality of marking of pupils' work and too little guidance is given to pupils as to how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory with some good features. Currently there are too few opportunities for pupils to acquire literacy and numeracy skills at a faster rate by the promotion of their writing skills across the curriculum and for them to take part in more problem solving and investigative activities in mathematics. However, provision in design and technology and the development of pupils' computer skills have improved significantly. Many pupils play a musical instrument and learn a modern foreign language. The provision made for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities and higher attaining pupils is satisfactory and continues to improve but is not yet fully impacting on how well they achieve. The good array of visits and visitors helps bring learning to life and fill the pupils with enthusiasm as well as forging effective links with the local community. The school promotes healthy lifestyles well through a strong emphasis on physical education and offers a wide array of extra-curricular sporting clubs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Teachers and support staff know the pupils very well and demonstrate a strong sense of care. This is one of many things that parents appreciate about the school. Pupils feel very safe and know that there is always someone to talk to if they have any concerns. Appropriate procedures are in place for safeguarding pupils and for child protection. Established links are in place with outside agencies to ensure help is available for pupils experiencing any difficulties. Good quality systems for tracking

pupils' academic development have been put in place. However, the school does not yet do enough to ensure pupils have an accurate awareness of the levels they are working towards or to enable them to play an active role in setting and reviewing their own targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school's evaluation of its own effectiveness is generally accurate. The headteacher has moved the school forward effectively since significant weaknesses were identified in the work of the school over two years ago. Teaching and curriculum provision have improved and assessment is now more robust. The headteacher has built up a good team spirit and the recent appointment of the deputy headteacher has strengthened the senior management team and has seen good improvements in the management of provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. However, the role of subject leaders is not strong enough and teachers are not aware enough of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors' recognition of the need to act as a 'critical friend' is stronger than in the past but governors are still not sufficiently evaluative and strategic in their direction of the school.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

6 December 2006

Dear Children

Northfield Junior School, Falcon Road, Dronfield, Derbyshire, S18 2ED

You may remember that I visited your school recently and this letter is to tell you about what I found out. Before I do that I would like to thank all of you for making me feel so welcome and for being so polite and interesting when I spoke to you. Everywhere I went in school I was greeted with smiling faces. I had the chance to talk to many of you and it was really pleasing to hear about how much you enjoy school, that bullying is not an issue and that there is always someone to talk to if you have any problems.

I found that the school offers a good range of clubs, visitors and visits out of school that you really enjoy and appreciate and which you think makes school a far more interesting place to be. The school works hard at making sure that you are cared for and looked after and helps you to keep fit and healthy. A major strength of the school though is you.... the children! I was very impressed with your excellent behaviour, the manner in which you look out for one another and how you are always ready to give a helping hand. Mr Anderson and all the staff work together well and he is keen to make the school an even more exciting place for you to learn.

There are times when not all of you do as well as I think you are capable of and so I have asked the school to make sure that teaching always helps you to make good progress and to reach higher standards, particularly in writing and mathematics. I have also asked them to make sure that how well you are doing is carefully and regularly checked up on, for teachers to let you know what is needed to improve your work and for them to give you chances to set some targets for yourselves.

Mr Anderson, the staff and the governors want the school to get better and better. Having met you I am sure you will want to play your part as well. I wish you every success in your futures. It was a pleasure and privilege to meet you.

Martin Newell

Lead Inspector