

Caister Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120795
Local Authority	NORFOLK
Inspection number	291861
Inspection dates	21–22 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Ann Taylor

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

Type of school	Middle deemed primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	8–12
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	439
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Andrew Hird
Headteacher	Mr Michael O'Reilly
Date of previous school inspection	25 November 2002
School address	Kingston Avenue Caister-on-sea Great Yarmouth Norfolk NR30 5ET
Telephone number	01493728223
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average middle school, sharing a site with a first school from which most pupils transfer. Pupils' attainment on entry in Year 4 is at least average and often above. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties or a statement of special educational need is above average. The area is less well off than the national average. Most pupils come from Caister with a fifth coming from Great Yarmouth and the surrounding area. Most children are White British and speak English as their first language. The school has achieved the Football Association Charter Standard. In 2008, it is changing to a junior school for children aged seven to eleven.

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 school which has identified weaknesses in the rate at which pupils are progressing and has made increasing their progress its over-riding priority. Whilst acknowledging it needs to improve, the school has held an unrealistically high view of its own performance. Standards over the past two academic years have fallen and aspirations have been too low. This new determination has seen a rigorous pupil tracking system introduced, enabling a tighter grip on progress, which involves weekly checks on each pupil's performance. Increasing involvement of the local authority, coupled with the school's willingness to act swiftly on advice, is securing improvement. As a result, the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve. Targets for 2008 have a good degree of challenge built in, which is a sign that the school is expecting more of itself. Pupils are now reaching average standards, progressing satisfactorily and receiving a satisfactory quality of education.

Leadership and management are satisfactory and are successful in ensuring that pupils' personal development and pastoral care are good. This results in pupils who enjoy school, are happy here, and take full advantage of the good range of sports, activities and enrichment events on offer. Due emphasis is given to encouraging pupils to follow healthy lifestyles, which the majority show they understand. Most attend well but the attendance of a very small minority is poor and the school does not follow this up vigorously enough. Academic guidance to help pupils improve their work is now satisfactory as a result of recent improvements, but is not yet consistent throughout the school. Leaders are increasingly clear about what needs to be done and demonstrate drive and determination, but have not translated this into effective improvement planning. The ability to use and interpret whole school assessment data is not well developed. The school does not have a secure grasp of pupils' standards when they enter in Year 4. Testing starts very soon on arrival which gives little settling in time and prevents pupils from revealing their potential. As a result, the school is not able to measure accurately how much value it adds between Years 4 and 7.

Subject coordinators in English and mathematics provide satisfactory leadership. They are rapidly gaining a better awareness of standards, progress and teaching in their subjects. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is satisfactory overall, but for pupils with statements of special educational need it is unsatisfactory as some do not receive all the support that they are entitled to. This is because the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) does not have enough management time to fulfil her monitoring role. Links with other schools are good. Parents are generally very positive about the school but a significant minority feel their views are not sought or listened to.

Teaching is satisfactory overall and a few lessons are good. Behaviour management and relationships are strong, but a common weakness is not tailoring planning to meet the needs of pupils with different levels of ability, especially higher attaining pupils. Teachers are not being given enough clear guidance on how to improve their teaching from satisfactory to good.

Whilst the school's overall effectiveness is satisfactory, it is inadequate in the way performance is monitored, evaluated and improved. This is a key weakness for the school to address.

What the school should do to improve further

- Implement better school improvement planning at all levels, based on more rigorous analysis of whole school performance data.

- Improve achievement and raise standards, particularly in English (especially writing), mathematics and science, by raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can do.
- Make better use of the checks on teaching and learning to ensure that teaching is brought up to the quality of the best.
- Improve the attendance, guidance and support for potentially vulnerable pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is now satisfactory as a result of improvements in the current school year, but was inadequate over the previous two years. Pupils enter Year 4 with standards that are at least in line with and often above those seen nationally in the key areas of reading, writing and mathematics. Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6, and in Year 7 when pupils leave, are within the average range, apart from in writing and mathematics, which were lower last year. Writing results were considerably lower than reading. Many higher ability pupils did not reach the advanced levels of which they were capable. Girls underachieved in many areas, although currently the progress of girls and boys is similar.

Standards this year have improved and are broadly average. The great majority of pupils are now progressing and achieving satisfactorily. This is revealed through results in the improved individual pupil tracking data and supported by the progress seen in books and lessons. Progress in writing is inconsistent across the school and better in some year groups than others.

Pupils with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress because of the sound support they receive in class and in the 'success zone' learning base.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and underpins the respect they have for one another. Behaviour is predominantly good and pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They are very keen on their clubs and attend regularly. Drama is a popular choice and there are good opportunities here. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They feel that there is some over-boisterous behaviour by older pupils but know that adults will help them. They have a good idea of how to keep fit and healthy and appreciate the good quality snacks and lunches. Pupils enjoy school life and the great majority attend regularly. However, the school does not do enough to follow up the persistent absenteeism of a very small minority. Through fund raising, school council and local community involvement, pupils gain a good understanding about being good citizens. These qualities, together with their sound progress in developing literacy, numeracy and computer skills, prepare them satisfactorily for their future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Relationships and behaviour management are generally good, which ensures that pupils work hard and have positive attitudes. Teachers often plan interesting activities and use interactive whiteboards effectively. In good lessons, of which there were a few, pupils were clear about what they were learning, suitably challenged and

knew how to improve. However, there is not enough good teaching to enable pupils' progress to be better than satisfactory. Most lessons are not sufficiently refined to meet pupils' differing learning needs, particularly for higher ability pupils. Teachers do not make enough use of assessment information to move pupils' learning on to the next step. Sometimes, pupils are not told clearly enough what they are learning about. Pupils with learning difficulties receive satisfactory support through the 'success zone' and in class, although teaching assistants are not deployed to best effect.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum covers all expected subjects and meets most pupils' needs satisfactorily. However, few links are currently made between subjects which have a natural affinity with each other. The school has established an appropriate focus on writing, but this has yet to improve standards to bring them in line with reading.

There are strengths in extra-curricular and enrichment activities which lead to good personal development and enjoyment in learning. Opportunities include clubs in art, dance, drama, choir and football. The well established engineering club is sponsored by local businesses and is successful in local and national competitions. Visits locally and abroad (Sweden, for example) add a valuable extra dimension. Pupils are well prepared for their move to the high school through links that really benefit the creative arts, especially in drama, which is strong. There are good enrichment activities for gifted and talented pupils through local work with other schools, but the curriculum delivered in lessons does not challenge them enough.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pastoral care is good because pupils are well looked after and relationships are positive and friendly. Procedures for safeguarding pupils meet the latest government requirements although there has not been any child protection training for mid-day assistants. Academic guidance is satisfactory as a result of recent improvements. The new progress tracking system is beginning to have a positive impact. Teachers now have a clear picture of their pupils' levels of ability and where they need to progress to at the end of the school year. However, the use of targets to help pupils improve is at an early stage. Marking is inconsistent: some assists pupils to improve their work but this is not true of all marking. Support and guidance for pupils with learning difficulties are satisfactory overall but inadequate for those with statements of special educational need. This is because the SENCO is not given enough time to check on quality. Consequently, the pupils with the most significant difficulties are not always getting the right type of teaching and support to help them make good progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher and senior team successfully promote good pastoral care and personal development for pupils. The 2006 results were low and galvanised the school into action. This has resulted in improved monitoring of individual pupils' progress and appropriate action to identify and remedy underachievement which is beginning to have a positive impact. This shows that that the school has satisfactory capacity to improve. However, although school leaders

know clearly what needs to be done, the written improvement plan is not sufficiently well focused and lacks clarity of purpose. Moreover, there is too little whole school analysis and interpretation of data to inform improvements. Monitoring of teaching and learning is satisfactory and, with local authority support, it is beginning to become more focused on improving quality. Self-evaluation processes provide an over generous view of how well the school is doing.

Subject coordinators in English and mathematics are providing satisfactory leadership. They have responded well to local authority advice and support, especially in mathematics, and are developing a sound awareness of standards in their subjects and what needs doing to improve quality.

Governance is satisfactory. The chair of governors has a strong working partnership with the headteacher and is increasingly focused on challenging the school's performance in order to bring about improvement. The school works well with others, leading to initiatives in the creative arts and enrichment activities for gifted and talented pupils. It is a strong catalyst for community involvement.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
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	2
The attendance of learners	4
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.

Annex A

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	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
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

24th March 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Caister Middle School, Kingston Avenue, Caister-on-Sea, Norfolk NR30 5ET

Thank you for helping us when we visited to inspect your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you and were impressed by how polite and friendly you were. This letter is written to share with you what we found and how you can help the school to improve.

You told us you are happy in school and feel the adults look after you well. We agree. There is certainly a good amount going on in the way of clubs and activities and we urge you to keep on taking full advantage of them. You behave well and have good attitudes to your school work. Younger pupils told us they feel Year 7's are too boisterous at times but you are all happy that adults listen to you and do all they can to help. We agree with this as well.

We have asked Mr O'Reilly and everyone to improve the following areas. We think the way the school plans improvements in your education needs making much sharper. You could perhaps get involved with this process via the school council. There are some good lessons where all of you are challenged and you know just what to do to improve and we have asked the school to try and make sure that all the lessons are as good as these. Standards in English (especially writing), mathematics and science need improving and you can do your bit by working hard in these subjects. Teachers need to expect more from you so you make quicker progress. Some pupils need additional help and guidance and the school has been asked to look at this.

With best wishes for your future

Mrs A Taylor

Lead Inspector.