



Fakenham Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 120805
Local Authority NORFOLK
Inspection number 291864
Inspection dates 23–24 November 2006
Reporting inspector Michael Miller

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

Type of school	Junior	School address	Queen's Road
School category	Community		Fakenham
Age range of pupils	7–11		Norfolk NR21 8BN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01328 862188
Number on roll (school)	321	Fax number	01328 856678
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Mark Halford
		Headteacher	Ms Lesley Cook
Date of previous school inspection	2 July 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
7–11	23–24 November 2006	291864

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Fakenham Junior School is a larger than average school, situated near the centre of the market town of Fakenham, in Norfolk. Pupils enter the school, in Year 3, with overall average levels of attainment. Most pupils are of White British ethnic origin. The number of pupils from minority ethnic groups, or learning English as an additional language, is low. The proportion of pupils taking free school meals is above average. An average percentage of pupils have learning difficulties or disabilities. However, the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need is low.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This school provides a satisfactory standard of education overall. Resources are used increasingly effectively, and the school achieves satisfactory value for money. Standards of work seen, and in lessons, are mainly average to below average, with pupils' achievement being broadly satisfactory overall. Pupils' standards in the Year 6 national tests have been below average but they have risen a little in the last two years to nearer average. However, pupils' progress between Years 2 and 6 has also been a little slower than the average for some time. Consequently, from September 2006, the school has voluntarily joined a national support programme designed to raise standards and accelerate pupils' progress. This is a positive move, and is starting to help develop teachers' skills in promoting literacy. The school has also been leading work with the cluster of partner schools in the local Primary Strategy Network, in order to develop further its expertise. This is already having a positive impact on improving learning and progress in mathematics.

Overall, learning and the teaching which underpins it are satisfactory. There are some improving features, particularly in the use of assessment, but these are not yet applied consistently enough by all teachers. One of the school's top priorities is to improve the quality of curriculum planning to ensure that all pupils achieve well. Whilst some progress has been made, for example in mathematics, it is work-in-progress. More needs to be done, particularly in English and science, to ensure that lessons are consistently matched well to pupils' abilities, especially for the more able, gifted and talented.

Pupils' personal development and the care provided for them are satisfactory overall. The school has worked successfully, since the last inspection, to improve pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to school and these are now good. This has created a more secure climate for learning. Pupils also acquire a good understanding of how to live healthily. However, the school has yet to consider how pupils' spiritual and cultural development can be integrated more firmly throughout all subjects to increase pupils' awareness of cultures other than their own. Satisfactory procedures for assessing pupils' progress have been put in place recently, but the use and interpretation of these helpful assessment data are not yet consistent across the school.

Overall leadership and management are satisfactory and the school's capacity to improve is now adequate. Progress on some of the issues arising from the last inspection, for example, in refining procedures for assessing pupils' progress and improving writing standards, has been too slow. Systems for monitoring and reviewing the school's performance and acting on the findings have lacked rigour and the governors have not been involved enough. However, good new appointments to important subject and curriculum co-ordinator posts have been made and the school is now moving in the right direction. Nevertheless these developments have been too recent to be secure and routine to the school's work. Although the school's overall effectiveness is satisfactory, the rigour with which it has monitored its performance and acted on the findings to raise standards has been inconsistent. Before its next section 5 inspection, Ofsted inspectors may visit the school to monitor the progress

it has made in remedying this weakness. The school would receive two to five days' notice of such a visit.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise pupils' progress and achievements in English, mathematics and science by ensuring that teaching provides increased levels of challenge and more closely matches the needs of all groups of pupils.
- Ensure that management, at all levels, including governors, establishes more rigorous ways of analysing and evaluating the school's performance, especially pupils' progress, to become routine to the school's work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Attainment in the Year 6 national tests was below average but more recently, it has risen a little and was broadly average in English, mathematics and science in both 2005 and 2006. Whilst pupils' progress and achievement in mathematics is satisfactory, their progress in both English and science has been a little slower and pupils have not achieved as well as they could. At the last inspection, pupils' English skills in writing were identified as a key issue for improvement. Difficulties with staffing over recent years have affected the coordination of literacy work so that writing standards, especially those of boys, have been slow to improve. Targets in this area were not met. However, current teaching is having a satisfactory impact on improving standards of literacy and the work of subject leaders in both literacy and science is proving effective. Pupils' progress and achievement seen in lessons and in pupils' work are currently satisfactory in both mathematics and science. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities achieve satisfactorily.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils' moral and social development is good. The vast majority of pupils have positive attitudes to learning, enjoy coming to school, and behave well. Attendance is above average because of good procedures which promote this. Social skills are developed well through extra-curricular activities, educational visits and a breakfast club. Pupils' understanding of cultures other than their own is satisfactory. The opportunity to represent other pupils' views through the School Council develops successfully their confidence. Pupils are pleased that the school takes their opinions seriously. They contribute well to the school and local community, regularly organising fundraising activities and taking part in community events. Teachers use praise effectively, so that pupils are confident to 'have a go' in new situations. Pupils have a good understanding of the need to develop healthy lifestyles. Personal, social and health education is taught at appropriate levels. Pupils' personal development prepares them adequately for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers know their pupils well. Pupils say they like school because 'teachers make learning fun'. Working relationships between pupils and teachers are good. Teachers are increasingly using interactive white boards to involve pupils more effectively in their learning. Nevertheless, teachers' planning is variable in quality. The best matches the work carefully to the different abilities of pupils. However, in some classes either lower attainers find the work too difficult or the more able find it too easy. Consequently, not all pupils are challenged sufficiently, or make as much progress as expected. Teaching assistants provide sound support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, resulting in the pupils' satisfactory progress. Marking is frequent, but does not always tell pupils what they have done well or how to improve. Recently introduced assessment procedures are now helping to monitor better pupils' progress, so potential underachievement is being recognised more quickly. However, these procedures have not been in place long enough to impact fully on standards.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and meets pupils' basic learning needs. The school now places an adequate emphasis on improving pupils' research skills and on lessons where pupils solve problems. This is resolving successfully some areas for improvement from the last inspection. Pupils receive good personal, health and social education, and have a sound understanding of staying safe and living in a healthy way. New initiatives, for example in literacy, are beginning to improve the curriculum for writing. This is because most teachers now have a better understanding of how to improve pupils' work and raise standards. The science co-ordinator has emphasised the importance of making lessons as practical as possible so that pupils now take a greater interest and consequently make faster progress. Visits to places outside school, and visitors to the school, contribute positively to pupils' social and cultural development. Parents agree that the range of extra-curricular activities is good.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Arrangements for pupils' care, guidance and support are satisfactory. There are suitably robust procedures for safeguarding pupils. Vulnerable pupils are supported well by the school. The school actively promotes the development of healthy lifestyles. Teaching assistants and external agencies are being used well to support pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, and those for whom English is an additional language. Satisfactory procedures for monitoring pupils' academic development have been introduced recently. These are beginning to be used to identify more accurately

individual pupils' needs, in order to raise skills and standards. Pupils with behavioural and emotional difficulties receive good support and guidance from the Behaviour Support Assistant. Pupils have satisfactory general learning targets, which they understand. However, these targets have yet to be refined to ensure that individual pupils know clearly what their next steps in learning are and that targets for the most able are challenging enough. Links with the secondary school are good and help to ensure a smooth transition for the pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher provides satisfactory leadership. The senior leadership team, which has some good new appointments, is now driving successfully the school's improvement. Self-evaluation is honest and realistic, and the monitoring of the school's performance now adequate, but these improvements are recent. There has been a history of a lack of sharpness in the way performance is evaluated to secure improvement. The school identifies correctly its weaknesses but has not acted decisively enough on them to maintain sufficient momentum for improvement. It is now working closely with the local authority to ensure its standards rise more rapidly. In addition it has joined the Intensifying Support Programme, a national programme designed to help raise standards and accelerate pupils' progress. Consequently, a clearer direction is now being set for the school. Although the governing body fulfils its statutory role satisfactorily, it has been over-reliant on the headteacher to help it do so. Over the past year, it has taken increasing responsibility for its role as critical friend to 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	No

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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
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	4
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

25 November 2006

Dear Pupils

Fakenham Junior School, Queen's Road, Fakenham, Norfolk, NR21 8BN.

We would like to thank you all for welcoming us into your school. We were impressed by the smiles on your faces, and your friendliness towards us. We enjoyed our conversations with you. This letter is to tell you what we found out about your school.

These are the things we found are best about your school:

- Together with your teachers, you make the school a friendly place.
- You behave well, pay attention in class, and enjoy being involved in learning.
- You enjoy healthy competition, particularly for the weekly House Cup!
- The school provides you with a good range of sports and clubs outside lessons.
- We liked the way you are able to become involved in local community activities.
- Your teachers are enthusiastic, and determined to help you to improve.

What we have asked the school to do now:

- Help you to improve your skills and learning in English, mathematics and science by ensuring that lessons have just the right level of challenge for you all.
- To improve the ways staff and governors learn from things which did not work as well as they had hoped, in order to help you make better progress.

You, too, can help by continuing to work hard and support each other.

With all best wishes

Michael Miller Lead inspector

Lynn Lowery and Roger Fry Team Inspectors