



Sprowston Middle School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 120852
Local Authority NORFOLK
Inspection number 291881
Inspection dates 8–9 March 2007
Reporting inspector Kenneth Thomas

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Recreation Ground Road
School category	Community		Sprowston, Norwich
Age range of pupils	8–12		Norfolk NR7 8EW
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01603 425150
Number on roll (school)	238	Fax number	01603 416581
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Dr Peter Wilde
		Headteacher	Mrs Mary Anne Massey
Date of previous school inspection	9 December 2002		

Age group 8–12	Inspection dates 8–9 March 2007	Inspection number 291881
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average size middle school. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is about average as is the percentage of pupils with statements of special educational need. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is also about average. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language, none are in the early stages of acquiring the language. Although covering a wide range, pupils' attainment on entry to the school broadly matches that expected for their age. In September 2007 the school will become a junior school for pupils aged 7 to 11.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education. It has a number of good features. The environment is supportive for learning and pupils feel safe and secure because of the good quality care found throughout the school. As a result, pupils enjoy their education and their behaviour is good. Their personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. They understand the value of healthy lifestyles and make good contributions to the school community. All of these, with the satisfactory progress they make, help to prepare them satisfactorily for the next stage of their education. Parents' views of the school are very positive. As one parent wrote, 'My children really like school and I think this is because of the friendliness of the teachers.' Some parents rightly praise the support the school provides for vulnerable pupils and for those with learning difficulties or disabilities.

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. Following the 2005 national test results in English, mathematics and science, when standards were very low, more systematic procedures for reviewing the work of the school were introduced. Although the school's evaluation of performance tends to be over-generous, these procedures, together with the better use of assessment information to monitor pupils' progress, are having a positive impact. This was seen in the 2006 tests where results improved to reach the national average. Although the results overall improved, a significant number of pupils underachieved and the school's targets for English and mathematics were not reached. Inspection evidence shows that pupils are making better progress and achievement is satisfactory. However, progress is uneven because there is too much inconsistency in teaching and learning. While there is much good and, occasionally, outstanding teaching, too many of the lessons are satisfactory. The planning for these lessons does not make enough use of the available assessment information to ensure that the work offers pupils the level of challenge needed to raise standards more rapidly. While teachers mark pupils' work very conscientiously, in many instances marking does not give pupils enough guidance on how to improve their work and achieve the next steps in learning.

The school provides a good curriculum which is enriched by a wide range of out-of-school activities. Governance is good. Governors are highly supportive and provide the school with considerable expertise. The school has tackled all of the issues from its last inspection and the steady improvement seen over the last 18 months gives the school satisfactory capacity for further improvement. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure greater consistency in teaching and learning in order to accelerate progress and raise standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Improve teachers' use of assessment information in their planning so that pupils are presented with more appropriately challenging work.

- Ensure that the marking of pupils' work provides them with better guidance on what they need to do to improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and standards are average. The results of the end of Key Stage 2 national tests in English, mathematics and science have varied considerably over recent years. These results were above average in 2004, but dropped to below average in 2005 when achievement was unsatisfactory. Although results rose in 2006 to be broadly average, a significant number of pupils underachieved. The school's targets for both average and higher-attaining pupils in English and mathematics for 2006 were not met. However, inspection evidence shows that pupils' progress, including the progress of those who have learning difficulties or disabilities, has improved since then and is now satisfactory. This important improvement has been brought about because the school's leadership is now ensuring that better use is made of assessment information to identify and tackle underperformance.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school is a happy environment where pupils feel valued as members of the community. Most behave well, although the inattentive behaviour of a few slows progress in some lessons. Pupils are proud of their school and are keen to be involved. Most pupils enjoy learning and try hard to do their best. Attendance is in line with the national average. Pupils make a good contribution to the life of the school, for example, through their involvement with the school council, the 'eco team', as librarians and as 'buddies'. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and how to adopt healthy lifestyles. The emphasis on healthy meal options that are available at lunchtimes contributes to this effectively. Pupils' basic skills on leaving school, along with their social and teamwork skills, provide a satisfactory foundation for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

While teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, examples of good, and occasionally outstanding teaching, were observed. The school has identified the need to raise everyone's expectations in order to raise standards. The outcome of action taken to tackle this is seen in the many good lessons observed. These are well prepared, with a clear understanding of what pupils are to learn and proceed at a brisk pace. In these lessons good use is made of assessment so that pupils enjoy a range of stimulating and challenging activities. As a consequence, they make good progress. However, not

all lessons are consistently of this quality. In many of the satisfactory lessons, the planned outcomes are not as clear and not enough use is made of assessment information to ensure that work set is at an appropriately challenging level. Teaching assistants provide good support for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities.

Although teachers spend a great deal of time marking pupils' work diligently, and there are examples of effective marking, the overall quality is inconsistent. While marking is generally supportive, it does not always give enough guidance on the standard achieved and what pupils now need to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is reviewed regularly to improve the links between subjects with a particular emphasis on literacy and numeracy. The curriculum focuses well on the needs and interests of all groups of pupils. This contributes positively to pupils' enjoyment and achievement. The provision of modern foreign languages in all years helps to prepare pupils for the upper school. Personal, social and health education makes a good contribution to pupils' academic and personal development. The school has placed a good emphasis on physical activity as part of pupils' learning about keeping healthy. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has improved and resources to support teaching and learning are good. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities receive good support through well organised individual education plans. There is a good range of visits and visitors to school to extend learning and a wide range of out-of-school clubs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides a supportive environment in which pupils feel safe. Staff know pupils well and provide them with good personal support. Pupils say that they trust adults and feel very secure in school. Arrangements for child protection and ensuring pupils' safety are working well and meet government requirements. Careful attention is paid to all aspects of health and safety.

Support for pupils' academic development has been improved by the introduction of more systematic procedures for tracking their progress. This is enabling teachers to identify and support any pupils at risk of falling behind, and is contributing to their better achievement. However, although pupils have individual and group targets, not all of them are sure what these are or what they need to do to improve. Support for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities, and for vulnerable pupils, is good. The school has appropriate plans to enhance the support for gifted and talented pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher, together with the deputy headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team ensure that this is a cohesive and friendly community. The leadership team is committed to raising standards. This drive is being supported by their closer monitoring of teaching and learning and the better use of performance information across the school to identify and tackle areas of weakness. The school's self-evaluation is adequate, although its judgements are sometimes over-generous because they have not been linked closely enough to pupils' standards and achievement. Nevertheless, efforts on the part of the school leaders and managers have seen sound progress in the school over the last 18 months and demonstrate a satisfactory capacity for further improvement. Systems for reviewing staff performance are fully in place and all staff benefit from continuing professional development. Governance is good. Governors are highly supportive and keen to fulfil their roles as critical friends. Financial management is secure and learning resources are used well. The school works well in partnership with other outside bodies; for example, in providing facilities for community use and in enriching its arts and sport curriculum.

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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?	2
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	2
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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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	2
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

12 March 2007

Dear Pupils

Sprowston Middle School, Recreation Ground Road, Sprowston, Norwich, NR7 8EW

As you know, we recently inspected your school and this letter is to tell you about our findings. However, first, I would like to thank you all for the help you gave us during our visit. Your friendly smiles and cheerful greetings made it a pleasure to be in your school and we greatly appreciated your comments and opinions.

You told us how much you enjoy being at Sprowston Middle School and we were very impressed with your enthusiasm and your behaviour in lessons and around the school. These good features help your teachers because they can concentrate on helping you to learn. You told us how much you like lessons in which the work really makes you think and we have asked your teachers to make sure all of your lessons are like this. Your class teachers carefully check your progress and we have asked the school to make more use of this information when teachers plan their lessons to make sure that you are all doing as well as you can. Another way in which teachers help you is improving their marking of your work. We have also asked them to give you more guidance on the things that you need to do to make your work better. The school provides good care and support for you and this is particularly true for those of you who may be experiencing difficulties.

You are also key players in the school's success. Your good behaviour, hard work and the care you show each other, together with your willingness to take on responsibility, all help to make Sprowston Middle School such a happy and friendly community. Mrs Massey, staff and governors all want the school to carry on getting better and better. Having met you we know you will all want to continue to play your part as well.

With best wishes for your future success.

Kenneth C Thomas

Lead Inspector