

The Howard Junior School, King's Lynn

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120878
Local Authority	NORFOLK
Inspection number	291893
Inspection dates	20–21 March 2007
Reporting inspector	David Matthews

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	136
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Liz Ward
Headteacher	Mrs Gail Robins
Date of previous school inspection	16 September 2002
School address	Parkway Gaywood King's Lynn Norfolk PE30 4QJ
Telephone number	01553 774511
Fax number	01553 676258

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average junior school in an area of high socio-economic deprivation. Pupils start Year 3 with well below average standards. The proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals and with learning difficulties are well above average. Most pupils are White British and their first language English. A small number are learning English as an additional language. The school has gained Investors in People, Artsmark and environmental awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school that clearly knows its strengths and weaknesses and provides good value for money. Pupils are positively encouraged to believe in themselves and in their ability to achieve well in their learning. Pastoral care is outstanding. One parent wrote, 'Here children's confidence shines and they are keen to learn,' and another, 'All the staff are polite, caring and helpful and are there for parent and child in time of need or despair.'

Although standards are below average when pupils leave the school, they make good progress, given their attainments when they start in Year 3. Standards are better in science and English than in mathematics.

Because teaching is good and pupils feel secure, they achieve well and all groups achieve equally well. However, the setting of personal targets is not consistent and marking does not always make it clear to individuals how they can improve. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress, as do those learning English as an additional language. Outstanding teaching of pupils in smaller 'nurture' groups makes a strong contribution to their good progress.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good and some aspects are outstanding, particularly their contribution to the school and wider community and their understanding of healthy lifestyles. The curriculum is good and meets pupils' needs well, including those with learning difficulties.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is highly effective in fostering a climate where parents and pupils are valued, respected and very well cared for. All staff and governors appreciate and support this extremely positive ethos. The school has satisfactory systems for recording the progress of individual pupils. However, these records are not the useful tool that they might be to give all staff, governors and others involved in the school's work the clearest possible view of pupils' achievement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise attainment in mathematics so that it is at least in line with that in English.
- Be consistent in setting targets for individual pupils and in explaining how they can improve their work.
- Improve the records of pupils' progress so that they give a clearer picture of achievement to all who influence the school's development.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well. All pupils, including those with learning difficulties and those learning English as an additional language, make good progress from Year 3 to Year 6.

Results of national tests in 2006 showed that by the end of Year 6 pupils reached standards which were below national expectations overall. They were broadly average in science, slightly below in English and below in mathematics. Nevertheless, the trend in attainment over recent years, despite a fall in 2005, is an improving one. The school's information on the attainments of current Year 6 pupils shows that their standards are below average. However, from their very low standards on starting Year 3 they have made good progress to reach their present levels of attainment.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is good. Relationships are extremely positive and underpin a strong sense of care for each other. Pupils enjoy learning. As one boy commented, 'I love all the exciting things we do on trips!' However, some pupils do not take sufficient initiative in their learning because not all teachers give them a clear lead on what they need to do better. Most pupils behave well. The small minority with behavioural problems are managed well and do not disturb learning for the others. Attendance remains well below the national average. However, the school does all it can to encourage parents to send their children to school regularly every day. Pupils know how to lead safe lives. They are clear how to avoid potentially hazardous situations and know to turn to a responsible adult for help. Pupils' knowledge of healthy lifestyles is impressive. They eat healthily, take plenty of exercise and are quick to advise their own families. The involvement of the pupils in the school and local community is outstanding. Given their attainments on entry to Year 3, pupils make good progress in the confidence and basic skills needed for their future economic well-being, notably in English and in their ability to work with others. Pupils take on jobs such as councillors, librarians and 'playground peacemakers' with pride. They are excellent ambassadors in sporting and musical events in King's Lynn.

Pupils' self-esteem grows in leaps and bounds and by the time they leave the school they are confident, sensible pupils ready for secondary school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers manage behaviour well so that most pupils focus effectively on their learning for most of the time. Ample rewards for good behaviour and for participating in lessons effectively encourage them to behave well and to respond to questions. The school is wisely extending its effective use of resources, such as 'real' newspapers and a Second World War teddy, to make learning more practical and engaging. Teachers use interactive whiteboards effectively to capture pupils' interest and to convey teaching points clearly. However, opportunities are sometimes missed for the pupils to use information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance learning. The school has already recognised that this is the case in mathematics and has plans to address the issue. Teaching assistants are often used very well to support the learning of less able pupils or those with learning and behavioural difficulties, including effective support in the opening parts of lessons. When marking books, teachers sometimes indicate what an individual pupil might do next to improve. However, this helpful marking and the supportive use of personal targets for pupils' next steps in numeracy and literacy are not found consistently throughout the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a rich and varied range of activities through lessons, clubs and outings. The needs of the pupils clearly drive the planning of the timetable. Different subjects are combined in the afternoons to introduce interesting topics and give useful 'hands on' experiences to enthuse learners. If any pupil does not progress as they should, the school moves quickly to

adapt the curriculum for the individual. The 'nurture groups' are proving most successful in raising pupils' self-esteem and bolstering learning. The promotion of healthy, safe and community minded living is at the heart of the school. Personal, social and health education matches the pupils' needs very well and results in confident and sensible children. Links with the infant school are improving, although subject leaders are not yet liaising as fully as they might with their counterparts to ensure the smoothest transfer in learning from Year 2 to Year 3.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Overall the care, guidance and support of the pupils are good. The pastoral care of the pupils is outstanding. The headteacher and her staff clearly understand the social and emotional needs of the pupils and their families. The school works very effectively with outside agencies to find just the right support. Pupils feel at ease and extremely safe at school and this is reflected in the good progress they make. The school meets all legal requirements for safeguarding pupils. Staff ensure the grounds and outings are safe, but not at the expense of removing challenges and making learning fun. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Teachers have an accurate view of how each of their pupils is progressing and match work well to need. However, they are not consistent in setting individual targets for the pupils, so pupils are sometimes unsure about what they need to do to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership in establishing and maintaining a climate where pupils and parents feel valued and understood. Pupils blossom as a result. They make good progress in their learning and particularly in their personal development. All staff ably support the headteacher in her determination to make the school as effective as possible. Recent improvements in pupils' achievements are a result of this determination. Since the last inspection the school makes better use of information from assessing pupils' progress to identify gaps in learning, and standards in science have risen as a result of better teaching. The school's capacity to improve further is good. Teachers know the pupils extremely well, particularly as individual characters. Evaluation of the school's work by the headteacher and senior staff is accurate; they know what needs to be done to make it even better, and act on this knowledge. The school's well placed emphasis on improving the teaching of mathematics has already begun to raise achievement in this subject. The more demanding targets for Year 6 pupils in 2006 were exceeded, and achievement in mathematics continues to improve. Teachers understand and act wisely on the school's satisfactory records of pupils' progress. However, the records do not best serve governors and others involved in school decision making in gaining the clearest picture possible of pupils' progress over time. While governors play a satisfactory and supportive role in monitoring the work of the school, they are in the early stages of asking probing questions about its effectiveness.

Annex A

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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

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	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

21 March 2007

Dear Pupils,

The Howard Junior School, Parkway, Gaywood, King's Lynn, Norfolk, PE30 4QJ

We were very pleased to meet you when we inspected your school recently. Thank you for giving us such a warm and friendly welcome and for helping us to find out so much about your school. We enjoyed talking to you, hearing about all of the interesting things that happen here and watching the DVD about Nelson.

The Howard Junior is a good school because the adults take really good care of you and help you to make good progress in your work and to grow into responsible, well behaved young people. We were impressed by the excellent ways that you take on responsibilities in your school and your understanding of how to stay healthy. The school is good at helping those of you who do not find it easy to learn or to concentrate well, so that you too make good progress.

There are ways that your school can be even better.

- You do not do as well in mathematics as you do in English. We have asked the teachers to see if they can help you to make at least the same progress in mathematics as you do in English.
- Sometimes teachers set you your own target so that you know what to do to get better. When they mark your work they sometimes explain how you can improve it. We have asked if they will help you all in these ways.
- The school keeps records of your progress in learning. We have asked if these records can be made clearer for the adults, including governors, who need to get an exact idea of how you are doing.

With best wishes for the future,

D Matthews and S McDermott The Inspection Team