



North Denes Middle School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 120973
Local Authority NORFOLK
Inspection number 291930
Inspection dates 21–22 November 2006
Reporting inspector Michael Best

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

Type of school	Middle deemed primary	School address	Jellicoe Road
School category	Community		Great Yarmouth
Age range of pupils	8–12		Norfolk NR30 4HF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01493 842063
Number on roll (school)	244	Fax number	01493 852011
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Pat Hollis
		Headteacher	Mrs Nancy Heywood
Date of previous school inspection	19 March 2001		

Age group 8–12	Inspection dates 21–22 November 2006	Inspection number 291930
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is of average size. The prosperity of the area is below average. Pupil mobility is just above average. Although below average, the proportion of pupils speaking English as an additional language is rising. The proportion of pupils currently identified by the school as having learning difficulties is above average, and the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need is broadly average. At present, two pupils are looked after by the local authority.

The school hosts a learning support centre for pupils with moderate learning difficulties but only a small number of the available places are filled. The centre currently provides support for pupils within the main school and shared placements for pupils from a nearby special school. There has been a significant turnover of teaching staff in the last three years, and the school has difficulty in filling vacancies and retaining staff. A very high proportion of teachers are at an early stage of their teaching careers. Reorganisation plans involving the school becoming a junior school were due for implementation in 2003 but have been delayed until 2008. The school, which belongs to a local 'excellence cluster' supporting schools in challenging circumstances, is currently participating in the local authority's intensive support programme.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvements in the school.

The school judges its effectiveness to be satisfactory but inspectors disagree because pupils are underachieving. Improvement since the last inspection has been inadequate as many of the issues identified for development at that time remain unresolved. The school's capacity for improvement has not yet been demonstrated in clear and sustained progress. Whilst identifying the issues it faces, the school does not sufficiently evaluate the impact of its actions to improve outcomes. At present, the school does not provide satisfactory value for money. Standards in Year 7 are exceptionally low in English and mathematics, and below average in science, reflecting the results of the statutory tests at the end of Year 6 in 2006. When they join the school at the start of Year 4, pupils' standards are below average. The overall trend in standards in the end of Year 6 statutory tests has shown only a modest improvement in the last four years, and pupils' overall achievement has remained significantly below average during this period. Pupils' personal development and well-being is satisfactory overall. Behaviour is satisfactory. Most pupils have a satisfactory enjoyment of school and a sound understanding of healthy lifestyles, but their attendance is unsatisfactory. Through the school council and links with the local community, pupils successfully make decisions that have an impact on school life.

The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate because there is not enough good teaching to enable pupils to make the progress they should. Taking into account the limited experience of the majority of teachers, teaching in Years 4, 5 and 6, though variable is satisfactory overall, with some good practice evident in Year 6 and the learning support centre. However, the large majority of teaching in Year 7 is inadequate and this is having an adverse affect on pupils' attitudes to learning as well as their progress. In discussion, a significant number of pupils say that some of their lessons are dull. Lessons are not challenging enough because assessment information does not sufficiently inform teachers' expectations of what pupils know and can do. Overall, the school provides a satisfactory curriculum and range of enrichment activities. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall. The school's pastoral system provides good quality care and guidance, and these effectively promote pupils' adoption of safe practices. However, assessment systems are not sufficiently robust. The effectiveness and efficiency of the leadership and management of the school are inadequate. Whilst the headteacher has a clear vision for the school's development, and has introduced a number of strategies to try to fulfil this, the impact of these recent initiatives on pupils' standards and achievement is yet to be realised. The school improvement plan identifies priorities but there is not a clear enough focus on how their success will be evaluated. Staffing is now more stable but issues over recruitment

and retention still remain, and contribute to a lack of development in middle management roles in raising standards and achievement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve achievement and raise standards, particularly in English and mathematics, by accelerating the rate of pupils' progress.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning, and use accurate assessment information to set pupils challenging targets and inform teachers' planning.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management, in particular that of middle managers, and develop greater rigour in the checks made on teaching and learning to ensure that they are always strongly focused on raising achievement and standards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Over the last four years, standards in mathematics have been below average and exceptionally low in English, where writing is even weaker than reading. In science, standards declined to exceptionally low after the last inspection but rose to below average in 2005; they continued to improve in 2006 and pupils made broadly satisfactory progress. However, standards in English and mathematics are exceptionally low and, despite an improvement in the number of pupils reaching higher levels in these subjects overall progress was significantly below average. Girls and boys achieve similarly but girls did not achieve as well as expected. In English and mathematics, the school met its targets for the percentage of pupils to reach the higher levels but missed those for pupils to reach the national averages. Comparison of test results with teachers' assessments show that teachers underestimated pupils' performance, particularly at the higher levels in mathematics and science.

Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, and those for whom English is an additional language, make similar progress to others. Where they receive good support, pupils make at least satisfactory progress but in other lessons they do not consistently sustain these gains.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. They develop a good awareness of moral and social matters. Pupils have a good understanding of keeping safe and take an active role in anti-bullying initiatives. Whilst most pupils behave well in and around the school, some low-level disruption in lessons results from the lack of challenge or uninteresting work. A significant minority of pupils, particularly girls in Year 7, show a degree of indifference. The well-above-average number of fixed period exclusions in the last school year has been significantly reduced by new arrangements to refer pupils to behaviour support staff

based in the school. Although the overall number of pupils taking unauthorised absence has been reduced, attendance remains stubbornly below the national average. Initiatives, such as circle time, the development of critical thinking skills and residential courses are satisfactorily promoting pupils' skills and qualities but their future economic well-being is being compromised by their standards in English and mathematics.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

In too many lessons the pace of learning is not brisk enough and pupils' interest wanes. Where teaching is inadequate, teachers' expectations are too low and teaching methods fail to engage learners' interests or meet their needs. In the small number of cases where teaching is at its best, pupils respond positively to interesting work that is well matched to their abilities. Discussions with pupils and scrutiny of their work indicate that pupils understand their class targets in reading, writing and mathematics. However, many are not sure about their personal targets and teachers do not consistently plan for, or refer to, these in lessons. Not all staff fully understand how to interpret the information now available to set, assess and evaluate challenging targets and inform teaching. Pupils are not always certain about what they need to do to improve and make the progress of which they are capable. The school's marking is inconsistently applied and some work is left unmarked.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Improvements in the provision for investigative and experimental work in science have started to lift results at the end of Year 6 but more recent developments in other curriculum areas have yet to improve pupils' achievement and standards. Teachers' planning does not consistently identify how staff will help pupils meet their individual targets. The school is working productively with local high schools to ensure that pupils in Year 7 receive their full entitlement to the curriculum. There is a strong focus on the teaching of personal, social, health education and citizenship. Extra-curricular sport, art and community involvement successfully enhances the school's provision, together with visits and visitors.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school works with a number of partners to support pupils with learning difficulties and behavioural problems within the school. Pupils who have learning difficulties or those with disabilities receive good support from the learning support centre, the learning support unit and from teaching assistants in mainstream classes and within groups of pupils who are withdrawn from lessons. In discussion, pupils say that they are confident in approaching staff if they have a problem, and that any incident of

bullying is promptly tackled. Arrangements for the safeguarding of children meet requirements. Overall, parents' views of the school are positive and the school welcomes their involvement such as the learning workshops in Year 4. Appropriate whole-school procedures for assessing and tracking pupils' attainment and progress are being introduced but these are not yet sufficiently robust.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

The headteacher successfully promotes the school's good quality pastoral care and guidance. The deputy headteacher demonstrates good organisational skills. However, many subject leaders have only recently assumed their responsibilities and have yet to have the necessary impact on improving teaching and learning, and on raising standards and achievement. The management of the provision for pupils with learning difficulties or those with disabilities is good in the learning support unit and satisfactory in the mainstream classes.

The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Although financial procedures are effective, the school retains more than twice the recommended funds in reserve. Governors take an active interest in the school and meet their statutory responsibilities. However, whilst they monitor provision, they do not sufficiently hold the school to account for the shortcomings in pupils' achievement.

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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?	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4

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	3
The attendance of learners	4
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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	4

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4
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?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
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	4
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?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

23 November 2006

Dear Pupils,

North Denes Middle School, Jellicoe Road, Great Yarmouth NR30 4HF

Thank you very much for welcoming us to your school, and particularly for sharing with us your views about it and about how you learn. We are pleased that so many of you are keen to learn and do well. You want to make the school better and, through the school council, you are contributing ideas and practical support - well done for getting the recycling project underway. The staff take good care of you and you are pleased that there is always an adult to listen to you.

There are some important areas in which the school needs to improve and it will need extra help to do this as quickly as possible. These are the things we are asking the school to work on immediately:

- help many of you to do much better in reading, writing and mathematics
- make sure that teachers know as much as possible about what you have already learned and what you can do so that they can plan challenging and interesting lessons
- improve how they check on how well you are taught and learn so that you make good progress and reach higher standards in your work.

We hope you will achieve much more as a result of the school making these improvements. Please do all you can to help the school do this by continuing to have your say through the school council, working hard in lessons and, most importantly, coming to school regularly. Inspectors will be visiting your school each term to see how you are getting along.

Work hard and enjoy yourselves.

Yours truly,

Mike Best

Lead Inspector