



Hethersett Voluntary Controlled Middle School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 121042
Local Authority NORFOLK
Inspection number 291972
Inspection date 13 December 2006
Reporting inspector John Francis

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

Type of school	Middle deemed primary	School address	Queens Road
School category	Voluntary controlled		Hethersett, Hethersett
Age range of pupils	8–12		Norwich, Norfolk NR9 3DB
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01603810498
Number on roll (school)	290	Fax number	01603812423
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Peter Steward
		Headteacher	Mr Andrew Whittle
Date of previous school inspection	17 January 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average school serving the villages of Hethersett and nearby Little Melton. The area has higher than average levels of employment. A few pupils come from minority ethnic families but there are none at the early stages of learning English. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is broadly average. Attainment on entry is broadly average as is the proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities. Very few pupils move out or come into the school during the year.

The school is being reorganised for September 2007 to become a junior school.

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 offers good value for money. It has continued to improve since the last inspection and shows a good capacity for further improvement. Standards are generally above average and although there was a dip in the national test results in 2006, the school has been quick to analyse the reasons why and put in place measures to address them. Good leadership and management by the headteacher, senior leadership team and governors are driving forward progress. The school has a clear and accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses. The planning towards the change of status is well advanced. However, the current school development plan is rapidly becoming out of date and lacks a clear timetable that shows how and when its goals and initiatives are to be evaluated.

The pupils' personal development is good. They enjoy being at school, are welcoming and very positive about their learning. Teachers try to make lessons as interesting as possible and as a result, pupils apply themselves well and most achieve what they are capable of. They like making decisions about things that affect them and they contribute well to school life. They appreciate the flexibility that some teachers build into their planning. Behaviour is good and pupils report that bullying is rare and quickly dealt with when it does happen. Good teaching, along with a good curriculum and the excellent opportunities for enrichment found throughout the school, prepares pupils very well for their future life. Monitoring of teaching is regular and accurate but records are not sufficiently detailed to show how the strengths identified can be used to further improve teaching across the school. The quality of care and support for pupils is good. This is recognised and welcomed by the parents. They also appreciate the regular information they receive and the opportunities they have to give their views of the school. However, they do not receive some information on their children's targets early enough to enable them to be more active in supporting their children's progress towards these.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide better records from the monitoring of teaching and learning and show how the strengths identified can be used to promote further improvement.
- Produce a clear timetable for monitoring and reviewing the development plan and focus more sharply on how to evaluate the impact of changes introduced.
- Give more timely information to parents on pupils' achievements and their resulting targets.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The standards achieved and the progress for most pupils is good throughout the school. High expectations as pupils move through the school ensure good progress with particularly good achievement over time in Years 6 and 7. By the end of Year 7 standards are above those expected for this age. However, the most recent test results

at Year 6 in 2006 show a fall in results from the high levels of 2005. While English and science remained above average, mathematics was average. This represented broadly average progress for these pupils and prevented the school from achieving its challenging targets. The school has been quick to analyse the reasons for this fall. It has introduced additional strategies in mathematics that are already showing an impact, particularly in improving pupils' mental skills. Pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities are well supported enabling most to make good progress overall.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are enthusiastic about school, enjoy their lessons and the wide range of other activities organised for them such as, for example, the steel band. As a result, attendance is good. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, with spiritual development being enhanced by the close links with the church and the good quality of assemblies. Pupils feel safe and are confident that they will be listened to if they are having problems. They have an exceptional awareness of healthy lifestyles and take part in a wide range of sporting activities during and after school. The school council has been active in proposing changes to provide healthier lunches and a walk to school initiative and, as part of the school's travel plan, many pupils now cycle to school.

Pupils have a good awareness of their community, learn to care about others and raise money for good causes. The good progress that pupils make in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) prepares them well for the next step in education and their future life. Pupils' excellent economic understanding comes through initiatives such as the Year 7 business venture and the school banking system, run by pupils with the support of a high street bank.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching engages the pupils well and is generally matched well to their needs. Across the school, teachers motivate pupils to attain high standards and have high expectations of their behaviour and work rate. The very good relationships and the way teachers use praise and encouragement means pupils approach their tasks with confidence and enjoyment. They respond well to the quality of teachers' questioning and are keen to demonstrate their skills and understanding. Marking is generally good, offering clear guidance to pupils on what they do well and what they need to improve on. However, there is no common marking system or approach, which is not helpful to pupils as they move through the school. Teachers' planning is detailed and, using the data from assessments, provides sharp targets and a wide range of opportunities for all pupils regardless of their ability. Good teamwork means that teachers support each other well, for example, with the common planning approach. Teaching assistants provide

good support for pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities. However, there are not yet enough trained to provide the support needed for the relatively high level of pupils who have specific language problems.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum is enhanced by an exceptional range of enrichment activities. These include additional sporting and creative activities, such as swimming, pottery and a writers' workshop. A strong emphasis on music results in a very high take up from pupils, with the steel pan ensemble being particularly popular. All pupils learn French which, along with the strong links forged with schools in a number of European countries, enhances their cultural knowledge. This also gives pupils real life opportunities to use their ICT skills. A range of visits and visitors raise pupils' awareness of health and safety issues and enhance their economic understanding. All of these form part of a good programme of personal and social education, which contributes very well to pupils' personal development.

Good adjustments to the curriculum meet the needs of most pupils with learning difficulties. Teachers are beginning to make links between subjects in their planning; a good example of this is in the integration of writing and ICT. The curriculum revision taking place in preparation for reorganisation is clearly aimed at strengthening these links.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are well cared for. Child protection procedures are clear and understood by all, and close attention is paid to ensuring pupils' health and safety. All statutory checks on existing and new staff are in place. Arrangements for supporting pupils at risk are good. At weekly meetings teachers review pupils' progress and share any concerns they might have. Teachers set clear targets in literacy and numeracy that help pupils understand how they can improve their work. These are geared to each pupil's particular stage of development and are suitably demanding. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities are identified rapidly and generally good support is provided. Teachers share information with parents about their children's progress and parents are pleased with the progress they make. However, the targets set for pupils following the termly assessments are not conveyed to parents early enough and, as a consequence, they are not always aware of what they can do to support their children. Transfer arrangements in and out of the school are good and make this transition as easy as possible for pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good leadership by the headteacher provides a clear direction for development. It contributes strongly to the school's ethos and is well focused on the pursuit of high standards. The good relationships established between staff, parents and governors encourage all to play an active role in the school's work. The school takes account of pupils' and parents views through questionnaires and discussions, but for parents, the time between these surveys is too long to respond effectively to changes in the school's systems. Governance is good. Governors have a clear view of the kind of school they want and are well focused on the strategic aspects of school development. Good attention to budgetary matters ensures that the school provides good value for money.

The targets in the school's development plan are well matched to the outcomes of self-evaluation. However, the current plan lacks a timetable for monitoring these or any clear indications of how the school will evaluate their impact. Self-evaluation and annual reviews of provision by subject leaders are suitably rigorous. The detailed analysis of data and the well-planned and informative monitoring show a commitment to continuous development. Monitoring the quality of teaching is a regular part of the school's practice but written records are not clear enough to enable the school to match the strengths identified to specific areas for improvement.

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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?	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	2
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	2
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	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

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.

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	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

14 December 2006

Dear Pupils

Hethersett VC Middle School, 22 Queens Road, Hethersett, Norwich, NR9 3DB

Thank you for making me welcome in your school. I enjoyed meeting you and was pleased that you wanted to share your views about your school with me. This letter is to tell you what I think of your school and how I think it can be even better.

You told me that your teachers made your lessons interesting and in the lessons I saw I would certainly agree with you. I was impressed by the way you worked together and how you expressed your views so clearly and politely. You listen carefully to your teachers and do all that is asked of you which means that you do well in your work. I was impressed by your enthusiasm for ICT. You told me that everyone on school cares for each other and I could see this through your good behaviour in school and the way you play together. I liked the way that the school council carries out its role. The links you have with other schools in Europe give you good opportunities to widen your education as do the wonderful range of extra activities available to you, especially the music.

To make the school even better I have asked your headteacher to do three things. They are not really things you can be involved in as they are more to do with the organisation of the school. One is about improving the information from the monitoring that goes on to help teachers improve their skills even more. The second is about the school checking on how well the changes it is making are working and the third is about telling your parents early enough about the targets you are working towards. This is something you can share with them, even now.

I am sure that Mr Whittle and the staff will continue to work as hard as they do to keep the school interesting and exciting. You can be part of this by keeping up your good attitudes and continuing to enjoy all you do so your school becomes even better. I would also like to wish the Year 6 and Year 7 pupils good luck in their new school, as they leave at the end of the year with the changes that come in September.

Yours sincerely

John Francis

Lead Inspector