

# Attleborough Junior School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	120926
<b>Local Authority</b>	NORFOLK LA
<b>Inspection number</b>	313794
<b>Inspection dates</b>	8–9 January 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	John Messer

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	420
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Bridget Reeve
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Chris Read
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10 June 2002
<b>School address</b>	Besthorpe Road Attleborough Norfolk NR17 2NA
<b>Telephone number</b>	01953453491
<b>Fax number</b>	01953452106

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors

## Description of the school

This school is larger than most junior schools. Most pupils are from White British families. A small number are from minority ethnic backgrounds. A few speak English as an additional language and of these, several are at an early stage of learning to speak English. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is average. Attainment on entry is broadly average. The newly appointed headteacher had been in post for eight weeks at the time of the inspection.

## 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 of Schools (HMCI) 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 improvement in the school.

There are many inconsistencies in the quality of education provided. There are examples of good teaching that are leading to more effective learning. The school's own data shows that the frequency of good lessons has risen recently. However, inspection findings indicate that the principles of good teaching are not firmly embedded in the school's culture. Too much teaching is inadequate and as a result, pupils' achievement and standards are unsatisfactory. Although some pupils make satisfactory progress, for a significant minority progress is inadequate. The results of national tests for pupils in Year 6, show that standards have been steadily declining for several years and in 2007, were below national averages in English, mathematics and science. Given their prior performance in the national assessments in Year 2, a large number of pupils made unsatisfactory progress and did not achieve in line with their potential. The proportion of pupils who exceeded the national expectation and attained the higher Level 5 was below average in English, mathematics and science. Too many pupils are not developing the key skills to the levels required to ensure that they are adequately prepared for the next phase of their education. The support provided for pupils with learning difficulties successfully helps to improve their self-esteem. Support for their learning is generally, but not always, appropriate. Nevertheless, overall they make satisfactory progress. Those newcomers to the school, who are at an early stage of learning to speak English, settle quickly and make satisfactory progress.

Support staff teach a significant number of lessons across the school. They have had little training in implementing effective teaching and learning strategies for the subjects they have been asked to teach. In other lessons, teachers often fail to engage and motivate pupils who then misbehave and further disrupt learning. Teachers do not always expect enough of pupils and set their sights too low. In too many lessons, there is insufficient regard to the wide range of ability in each class. Consequently, the work does not stretch the faster learners and work given to slower learners can sometimes be beyond them. As a result, in many of these lessons pupils fail to make adequate progress.

The newly appointed headteacher has begun to provide clear direction to the work of the school. The 'green shoots' of improvement are beginning to appear. For example, some pupils who were likely to miss their targets last year have responded well to very recent changes and indications are that they are back on track. Nevertheless, the lack of leadership skills of other senior staff limits them in their ability to support the headteacher sufficiently well to bring about and, crucially, sustain the rapid improvements needed.

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory and pastoral care is a strength of the school. Pupils' welfare is a high priority and staff are very caring. All the required safety procedures are in place. As a result, pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is satisfactory. Where teaching is good, pupils are enthusiastic and show that they are keen to learn and eager to succeed. A small minority of parents expressed concerns over the behaviour of a few pupils. With the very recent changes, behaviour is now mostly

satisfactory and pupils confirm that it has improved recently. Pupils report that they feel safe and secure in school but incidents of bad behaviour still occur. There is an appropriate anti-bullying policy but many pupils are not sure what to do if they feel bullied. They report that there are inconsistencies in the way unacceptable behaviour and bullying is dealt with by staff. Consequently, issues are not always satisfactorily resolved. Therefore, the signs of improvement are fragile; expectations of how pupils should behave and of how staff should manage pupils' behaviour are not yet securely rooted in the school's culture. Nevertheless, most pupils enjoy school, especially the good friendships that they make. Most are polite and sensitive to the needs of others. Pupils understand the importance of healthy eating and exercise. Physical education is an important part of provision and there is a good range of clubs to enrich learning.

Given the falling standards, the school rightly identified the need to improve strategies for tracking and monitoring pupils' progress. As a result, new recording procedures, introduced at the beginning of the current academic year, are being followed. However, the lack of action to remedy unsatisfactory teaching indicates that the school's ability to take swift corrective action is not yet secure. Nevertheless, the newly appointed headteacher has identified many of the areas in need of improvement and a relatively tentative start has been made to address issues systematically. Procedures for evaluating provision, especially teaching and learning have been introduced now but it is too early to assess their effectiveness in raising standards. Staff are hard working and welcome the guidance they are now beginning to receive. Most parents are pleased with the education provided for their children but a small minority rightly raised concerns about shortcomings in communications with the school.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve the rate of pupils' progress and raise standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Improve the consistency of teaching and raise teachers' expectations of pupils' performance so that all groups of pupils are well motivated and learn effectively in each class.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management, and make sure that leaders and managers are effective in evaluating the work of the school and ensuring that policies are implemented consistently.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 4**

Pupils' achievement and progress are uneven and inadequate overall because the quality of teaching is inconsistent and support staff have been given too much teaching responsibility without enough training. Until very recently, teachers had little effective guidance about how much progress was expected of pupils in each year group or how to set targets to help them make appropriate progress. The school's leaders had not checked progress frequently enough to identify groups of pupils who might be falling behind and who needed an extra boost. Consequently, pupils' achievement in some classes faltered and standards fell. Although staff are better informed now, the impact of actions taken are not yet demonstrated well enough in pupils' sustained academic growth. Under the guidance of the new headteacher, school leaders and staff are now aware of the very urgent need to improve rates of progress and raise standards. To this end, ambitious targets have recently been set for the amount of progress expected each year. However, success in reaching these targets has yet to be proved.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 3

Improving pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to their work has been a major focus for the new headteacher in the short time he has been at the school. New systems in place have already had a positive impact on morale of staff and pupils but there is still some misbehaviour in lessons and in the playground. The school has an anti-bullying policy but its implementation is inconsistent. Most pupils feel safe, enjoy school and attend regularly. Assemblies and the personal, social and health education programme effectively support pupils' moral and social development. The good range of extra-curricular activities makes a positive contribution to their cultural development. The partnership with the local high school to promote physical education is helping pupils to understand the importance of healthy lifestyles. The school council is well established and pupils are ready to take an increasingly active part in decision-making.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 4

The quality of teaching is inconsistent and inadequate overall. Some teachers maintain very high expectations of pupils' performance. They pay a great deal of attention to detail and insist on high standards of presentation. Interactive white boards are used well to present stimulating visual material that helps to capture pupils' interest. However, in sharp contrast, and in too many cases, other teachers talk too much at the expense of giving pupils opportunities to be actively involved in their learning and too readily accept poor standards of handwriting and spelling. Inadequate teaching is often the result of support staff having insufficient knowledge of the subjects they are teaching or appropriate training in how to teach effectively. In spite of the mixed experiences they receive, relationships between pupils and staff are mostly good. However, in a small minority of lessons teaching fails to motivate and inspire pupils for the full length of the lesson. As a result, behaviour deteriorates and relationships become unacceptably fragile.

## Curriculum and other activities

### Grade: 3

The curriculum provides a suitable range of work and related activities. Planning ensures that what is taught in each year follows on from that of previous years. The provision for literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. There are, however, inconsistencies in the extent to which the work and activities have been adapted to stimulate interest and be relevant to pupils' needs. In Year 3, thoughtful links between subjects create projects that engage pupils' interests and there are many opportunities taken to promote literacy and numeracy across the curriculum. This is not the case in all other years. Opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology in other subjects are limited. The curriculum is enriched by many additional activities involving sports, the arts and educational visits. All of these contribute towards making learning exciting. Likewise, singing and instrumental tuition add to music provision as do the opportunities for pupils to learn foreign languages.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 3

A high priority is given to the welfare of the pupils and staff willingly give their time to counsel individuals when they need help. Appropriate safeguarding arrangements are in place and comply with statutory requirements. There are satisfactory procedures in place to monitor attendance and the school is increasingly encouraging pupils to attend school regularly. Pupils are just starting to become involved in setting targets and goals to help them improve the standard of their work. Most pupils are able to recite and talk about their targets, which is helping them to understand better what they need to do next. However, this strategy for raising standards is at an early stage of development and it is too soon to judge its impact on school improvement. Some teachers give very good feedback to their pupils through high quality marking and assessment but this is inconsistent across the school. The guidance and support given to higher attaining pupils is often insufficient to make sure they achieve the standards of which they are capable.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 4

Overall, there has been insufficient improvement since the previous inspection. The lack of skill and expertise of leaders and managers in evaluating the school's performance and in taking very prompt remedial action when necessary has resulted in a decline in standards. Although governors identified weaknesses in test results, without the support of key staff in school, they were unable to determine the root causes of the decline. Nevertheless, appropriate actions by the governing body, ably led by the chair of governors, have started the process of recovery. For example, they have used the support of the local authority well to appointment a new headteacher. Although only in post for a short time, the headteacher has identified a range of weaknesses and is putting in place strategies to bring about improvements. Much needs to be done to eradicate weaknesses in teaching, halt the decline in standards and eliminate the legacy of underachievement that has built up. The governors and newly appointed headteacher have suitably high aspirations for the school. They are providing a firm steer but the lack of leadership skills of key teachers and shortcomings in relation to teaching expertise of other staff limit the school in its ability to bring about the changes needed, without additional support. Consequently, the school does not yet demonstrate the capacity to improve.

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

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
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	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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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**

10 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Attleborough Junior School, Attleborough, Norfolk, NR17 2NA

We enjoyed meeting you, especially those who gave up their time to talk with us. Thanks you all for being so friendly and helpful.

While we think that there are some particularly good things about the school, we feel that it needs extra support to enable you to make the best possible progress. You told us that you are happy in school and said that one of the best things about the school was how kind the teachers are. We agree. You are willing workers and want to do your best. They certainly work hard to try to help you to learn. You also said that you particularly enjoy making friends. The school is certainly a friendly place and you work and play happily together. You told us that you feel very comfortable and secure in school and that you get good advice about health and safety. You know how to look after yourselves and understand the need for regular exercise and a balanced diet. Most of you behave well and you talk sensibly about your work. A small number can be a bit silly and too rough at times. Perhaps the rest of you can help them to be more sensible.

We have asked Mr Read and the staff to do a number of things to make your school even better. We all agree that standards could be higher in English, mathematics and science so we have asked teachers to help you to make faster progress. To help with this, more lessons should be really interesting and everyone should aim at producing high quality work. We have also asked the leaders of the school to make clear plans to improve your education and should make sure that these plans are put into action across the school. Once these improvements have been made, we are sure that you will be able to do much better and we look forward to seeing standards rising.

We wish you every success in the future.

John Messer

Lead inspector