

Mulbarton Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120991
Local Authority	NORFOLK LA
Inspection number	313824
Inspection dates	22–23 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Nick Butt

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	172
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Howard Marriott
Headteacher	Mrs Beulah Chatten
Date of previous school inspection	17 March 2003
School address	The Common Mulbarton Norwich NR14 8JG
Telephone number	01508578242
Fax number	01508578893

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This small school serves a mixed residential rural area. It has hardly any pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds or who speak English as an additional language. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is low. Almost a quarter of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, which is above average. The number of pupils with statements of special educational need is more than three times the national average. The school was reorganised in September 2007 from a middle school, with pupils in Years 4 to 7, to a junior school taking pupils from Years 3 to 6. In effect, this meant that half the pupil population changed. There was also a restructuring of the leadership team. The school is now organised in two halves: three mixed-ability mixed-age Year 3 and 4 classes, and three Year 5 and 6 classes. The school has awards for promoting healthy lifestyles, for its international perspective and for developing its staff. It partners with the British Council in raising pupils' awareness of other cultures and traditions.

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 with many strengths. It has transformed successfully from a middle to a junior school because careful preparation that accompanied the transition has retained its family atmosphere. Under the strong leadership of its headteacher and deputy head, pupils are well-prepared for a life of learning through good teaching, outstanding pastoral care and good guidance and support. This contributes greatly to their huge enjoyment of school, and means they achieve well. As one parent put it, speaking for many, 'The teachers are enthusiastic and motivate the children.'

Pupils attain standards that are above average from broadly average starting points. They make good progress because teachers have high expectations of them and provide a good, exciting new curriculum that emphasises hands-on experience. Relationships in the school are very positive so that pupils want to do their best and work hard. Their personal development and well-being are good. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to live healthy lifestyles and feel safe at school, free from bullying or harassment. They support one another extensively as playground friends and school councillors, and all take part in jobs to help the school run smoothly. As a result of the creative and stimulating curriculum, pupils learn more independently than they did at the time of the last inspection, when this was an issue. They leave the school with a good set of basic skills.

Leaders have a well-developed view of the strengths and needs of the school, gained through some effective procedures for self-evaluation. At present, the school is changing the tracking system it uses to monitor pupils' progress. It recognises the need to assess how well pupils are doing more frequently so that a detailed picture is built up throughout the year. Teachers make good use of data to set targets in English and mathematics for pupils but do not always fully match work to suit pupils' varying needs. The new leadership team is having a beneficial impact on the provision for pupils and is ensuring a greater consistency of approach, for example in planning and marking. Governors bring a wealth of experience and skills from other fields to their work, and fulfil their role as a critical friend well. The school has made good progress since its last inspection, as standards have risen and teaching is better. It is well-placed to continue to improve further and gives good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Strengthen the tracking of pupils' progress so that staff have a clear view of how well individuals and groups of pupils are performing over time.
- Ensure teachers always use assessment data effectively to provide challenging work for pupils at all levels of attainment.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Two year groups entered the school in September as a result of the reorganisation. In both cases, they brought a wide range of skills and abilities that were broadly average. This is usually the case, although there are variations between the relatively small cohorts. Standards have fluctuated over time, but the trend is upward. In national tests for Year 6 pupils in 2007, standards in English and science were above average and average in mathematics. The school is reviewing its calculations policy to ensure that all pupils are confident in using different methods to solve problems, as this was an area of weakness last year. The new curriculum

emphasises mathematical investigations and as a result pupils are growing in confidence in applying their skills. Pupils achieve well and reach challenging targets because the teaching is good. Boys achieve as well as girls, and pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because of the effective support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils exchange work and ideas with children in Denmark, the Czech Republic and Ireland and find out about their different ways of life. They do not have such a clear understanding about other cultures, although they have started to learn French and Spanish. Pupils take plenty of exercise and know all about eating healthily. They say there is an adult to go to if they have a concern. They work and play together harmoniously. One pupil said, 'People are always nice and they always share.' The school council is active and has helped to improve playtimes by arranging playground friends. Councillors organise events that raise large sums for charity, such as a pyjama party. Pupils are involved in energy monitoring and helping in the office and contribute in many ways to the school community. Attendance is above average, a clear sign of how much pupils thoroughly enjoy school. They become confident learners and are ready for the move to high school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Lessons are enjoyable and run at a brisk pace. One pupil commented, 'They make it interesting and funny.' Teachers have good subject knowledge and explain clearly to pupils what they are to learn. Pupils behave well because they are highly motivated, and enter enthusiastically into discussion. In an outstanding mathematics lesson, pupils worked at stalls such as 'Peter's Perfect Pies' to solve real-life money problems. They were captivated by the attractive resources and the exciting activities, so much so they were pleading for more by the end. Planning is detailed, but does not always match tasks to pupils' exact level of need. This can result in work being too easy for some pupils. Teachers make good use of the ends of lessons to sum up what pupils have learned, including asking them to assess one another's work. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to the achievement of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those who have special educational needs.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum has been rewritten completely for the restructuring of the school, with the introduction of Year 3 and mixed-age classes. While it is still being refined, this has resulted in a vibrant and relevant programme of studies focused on developing literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils have had input into the new curriculum, for example in saying they would like more freedom in what they write about. This has led to all pupils keeping their own personal journals. The curriculum encourages pupils to reflect upon their learning and gives them a wide range of interesting experiences. This contributes well to their personal development and enjoyment of school. Pupils learning about rivers actually followed the course of a local river from its source to the sea in a single day, and were able to observe first-hand how its appearance changed. Pupils are involved in restoring a woodland area to support environmental work in

science. Personal, social and health education develops pupils' outstanding understanding of living healthily, including their appreciation of the dangers of certain kinds of drugs. The curriculum is enriched well by a wide range of clubs and visits and visitors. These include gardening, St. John's Ambulance and a girls' computer club.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

There are rigorous procedures to ensure pupils' health, safety and welfare, including risk assessments for events taking place in school as well as outside it. Outstanding pastoral support includes a focus on pupils' emotional development, personal as well as academic targets and services such as play therapy. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties is good, enabling them to take a full part in the life of the school and achieve well. Occasionally, targets on their individual education plans are too general and do not describe specific steps for their development. Consistent marking shows pupils how to improve. They have targets in English and mathematics, although these are not yet linked to National Curriculum levels. Pupils are becoming involved in their own learning through assessing their own and one another's work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Parents support the work of the school and praise the strong leadership given by the headteacher and deputy head. One said, 'I have found Mulbarton Junior School to be open, friendly and hard-working.' The school has successfully reorganised because the closely-knit staff team have worked extremely well together in making all necessary preparations, and settling pupils in quickly. With so many new pupils, it has been appropriate to review the school's tracking systems and to focus on the one that suits its needs best. Formal assessments are not currently held often enough to ensure that staff measure in close detail the progress pupils are making throughout the year. There is a good range of informal monitoring of performance, and subject leaders do an intensive annual audit that is reported to governors. They develop work plans for the following year based on their findings but these are not currently linked to clear objectives for improvement. The extended leadership team ensures that all sections of the school are represented in making decisions and this promotes accurate self-evaluation. Leaders have had a positive impact in raising standards and achievement and in promoting good teaching. This has enabled pupils to make good progress. Governors support the school well, and ask searching questions.

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

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

24 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Mulbarton Junior School, Norwich, Norfolk, NR14 8JG

Thank you very much for making us so welcome at your school. We did enjoy visiting you and finding out what you like. We agree with you that yours is a good school with many strengths. Here are some of them.

- You make good progress and reach standards that are above average.
- You behave well and take care of one another.
- You have an excellent understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle.
- Attendance is good and you thoroughly enjoy school.
- The teachers make the lessons interesting and fun.
- There are lots of opportunities for you to learn by doing exciting activities.
- The school cares for you extremely well.
- Mrs. Chatten leads the school well and the staff have turned it into a junior school very smoothly.

There are many pupils who have just started at the school. This is a good time for staff to make sure they are finding out how well you are doing at more regular intervals. We have asked them to choose a database for this information so that it is easy for them to track your progress. We are glad you enjoy your lessons so much. Some of you said you occasionally find the work a little easy, and we have asked your teachers to make sure it always challenges you.

Thank you once again for your help. Our best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mr. N Butt

Lead inspector