

Firside Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120901
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	327388
Inspection dates	17–18 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Anthony Knight HMI

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 (total)	280
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Jennifer Reynolds
Headteacher	Mr Simon Fisher
Date of previous school inspection	3 July 2006
School address	Middleton's Lane Hellesdon Norwich Norfolk NR6 5NF
Telephone number	01603 426550
Fax number	01603 403361

Age group	7–11
Inspection dates	17–18 June 2009
Inspection number	327388

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Firside Junior School is a popular, slightly larger-than-average junior school. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is much lower than the national average. A few pupils are from minority ethnic groups and a very small number do not have English as their first language. The overall proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is just below the national average. The percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is broadly in line with the national average. Most of these pupils have moderate learning needs or speech, language and communication difficulties.

The school became a junior school in 2007 following reorganisation. It works closely with other schools in the area and has made links with schools in China and Norway. The school has achieved Active Mark and Healthy Schools Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Firside Junior School is a good school. Pupils are very happy and make good progress as a result of the excellent relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils themselves. Parents find the school friendly and welcoming.

Although attainment dipped in 2008, good teaching is enabling pupils to attain standards that are again above the national average. Lessons are planned as an integral part of the good curriculum so that effective links can be made increasingly between different subjects. Tasks are managed well, although there is not always enough clarity about what the pupils need to do to provide an even better response. As a result, pupils are not always challenged sufficiently to reach the highest levels. Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding and they contribute excellently to the life of the school through, for example, the work of the school council, leading lunch-time activities, being playground leaders and suggesting how lessons should be organised. They also respond excellently to being given the opportunity to contribute to work in lessons through, for example, offering suggestions as to how their work could be improved, although this does not occur enough yet for all pupils to benefit. Good care, guidance and support enable pupils to feel safe, and make excellent healthy living choices. They really enjoy learning and are prepared well for life beyond school.

Good leadership has enabled the school to manage recent changes and develop good systems for collecting information about the progress pupils are making. The analysis of this information by senior leaders and subject leaders is helping to ensure pupils get extra help when this is needed. The school is aware of the need to now develop the ways this information is analysed centrally so that the progress made in different subjects and by different groups can also be seen easily. Self-evaluation by the school is good. Senior leaders are making the most of the strengths of the school and have identified correctly where further work is required. Good progress has been achieved since the last inspection and the school has demonstrated good capacity to improve. Financial management is secure and the school provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure pupils always know what to do to provide an even better response so all pupils are challenged and more pupils are helped to reach the highest levels.
- Give pupils more opportunities to contribute to work in lessons through, for example, offering suggestions as to how their work could be improved.
- Develop the central analysis of assessment data so the progress in different subjects and by different groups can also be monitored easily.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' attainment overall has consistently been significantly above the national average, but in 2008 it went below the national average. All evidence points to this being an uncharacteristic year and standards are once again closer to the school's previous success. However, the school recognises the need to give continued attention to ensuring more pupils achieve at the highest levels, particularly in English. When pupils join the school their attainment is broadly average and all groups, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make good progress during their time in the school. Boys and girls achieve similarly. This good progress was seen

clearly in lessons and through the school's greatly improved tracking of pupils' progress. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are also above average and this is a significant improvement since the last inspection.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils really enjoy coming to school. They behave well, and show genuine politeness to adults and take care of each other. Their attendance is good. Pupils readily accept responsibility as school councillors and playground leaders and play an excellent part in improving their school. They have been consulted about aspects of their learning and their suggestion of separate lessons for boys and girls in mathematics at Year 6 has proved to be very successful. Pupils have an excellent awareness of what they need to do to be healthy. For example, many are involved in extra sporting activities and cycle to school. They know how to keep themselves safe and understand how to use the internet safely. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They have many opportunities to develop their appreciation of different cultures through, for example, the link with a school in China. They show consideration for those less fortunate than themselves and frequently raise funds for needy causes both within the community and for faraway places. They have good numeracy, literacy and ICT skills which prepare them well for life beyond school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching meets pupils' needs effectively and enables them to make good gains in their learning. The teachers use time well and employ a variety of teaching styles to make lessons interesting. Questioning is used carefully and so pupils learn to explain their thinking methodically. Thoughtful use of resources supports pupils' learning well. For example, in an outstanding lesson, ICT was utilised extremely effectively to help pupils understand how to write a letter. This lesson also used excellent 'success criteria' which ensured all pupils knew what would make an even better response. More generally, lessons are planned and managed well but there is not always enough challenge, especially for those who find the work easier. As one pupil said 'Those that need most help get lots but those who are good do not always get as much'. There is not always enough clarity about what pupils need to do to provide an even better response. The assessment data on pupils' progress is being used increasingly effectively. This is enabling pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to be supported well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Consistent planning in each year group is used throughout the school to provide a good curriculum. A high emphasis is placed on daily literacy and numeracy lessons. Drama and philosophy sessions help pupils develop their speaking and thinking skills. Pupils' ICT skills are promoted effectively through weekly teaching sessions and other opportunities to use their skills in many areas of learning. The pupils talk enthusiastically about the design and technology topics they have enjoyed doing. For example, during 'Health Week' all pupils successfully learned to cook a variety of dishes. All pupils have the opportunity to learn a musical instrument in Year 4 and all pupils take part in Christmas productions. Pupils learn to speak Spanish in Years

3 and 4 and French in Years 5 and 6 and can learn Mandarin in an after-school club. Pupils comment very positively about the rich variety of physical education experiences in and out of school time and are keen to be involved in other extra-curricular activities.

The curriculum is being improved effectively with the recognition of the need to ensure that project work not only makes interesting links between subjects but also ensures pupils' skills are progressively developed in each subject. The school is looking constantly to find ways to improve provision. For example, it is exploring why pupils feel that some projects last too long. It also recognises the need to ensure the displays around the school include more celebration of pupils' achievements in all subjects so pupils have greater opportunity to see high quality pieces of work.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils feel happy and safe because the school provides a very caring and supportive environment. Careful attention is paid to safeguarding procedures, risk assessments and child protection and they meet requirements. There are very few incidents of bullying and racism. On the rare occasions when this does occur it is dealt with swiftly and effectively. Policies, including how to keep safe when using the internet, are kept up to date and they are applied on a day-to-day basis. Good support is given to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities but there is not always enough challenge for the more able pupils.

The tracking of pupils' progress has improved recently but is not yet established fully across all subjects. Nevertheless, there are good plans to extend its use so that there is easily-available information for all subjects and groups of pupils. The school works closely with outside agencies to support the needs of those who find it hard to learn so that they receive the help they need.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The recent challenges created through the change of age range in the school, and some instability in staffing, have been addressed well and pupils are being helped to again make good progress. The headteacher provides very effective leadership and has empowered staff skilfully, especially the strong middle leaders, to develop their teaching by making increasing use of the greatly improved assessment information. The school is aware of the need to develop the ways this information is analysed centrally. The governing body is engaged actively in the work of the school, providing good support for school visits and organising opportunities for pupils to speak to members about their views of the school. The school has developed excellent partnerships within and beyond the school. The views of parents are collected and pupils are actively involved in the running of the school. Good links are being established with other schools. For example, recent externally provided training about community cohesion was cleverly planned with two other local schools. While there are also excellent links with the community such as the mixed-age sporting opportunities, the school recognises the need to now ensure its actions in respect to community cohesion are planned and evaluated more systematically.

The overwhelming proportion of parents expressed very high praise for the school often commenting on how their children's lives have improved since joining the school. However, a small number of parents have concerns, mainly about the behaviour of a few pupils. The

inspection found behaviour to be good and the school has good systems in place to deal with less acceptable behaviour should this occur.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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?	1
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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
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
The extent to which 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	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 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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

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

19 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Firside Junior School, Norwich, NR6 5NF

We really enjoyed visiting your school and would like to thank you for welcoming us and talking to us so openly. You and your parents are right that Firside is a good school because it looks after you well and helps you make good progress in your learning.

We were pleased to see how your teachers plan your lessons carefully and help you enjoy the work. We have asked them to make sure you always know how you could provide an even better piece of work so you all feel challenged by the work you do. You can help by doing the very best you can and by telling your teacher if you find the work too easy.

What struck us most was how well you work and play together. It was good to see pupils leading activities during lunch-time and to hear about the good work of the school council. Your idea of learning mathematics in different groups for boys and girls has worked very well. We have asked your teachers to give you more opportunities to contribute to work in lessons through, for example, offering suggestions about how your work could be improved.

Your school has good records of how well you are doing and your teachers are making more use of this information to choose the best possible tasks for each of you. We have asked your school to collect this information across all subjects to check that all of you are making as much progress as you can.

It is clear that your school has your best interests at heart and knows what you need.

I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours faithfully

Anthony Knight

Her Majesty's Inspector