

Avenue Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120928
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	327393
Inspection date	22 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Godfrey Bancroft

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)	383
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Katherine Day
Headteacher	Mr Juris Zarins
Date of previous school inspection	19 September 2005
School address	Avenue Road Norwich Norfolk NR2 3HP
Telephone number	01603 441034
Fax number	01603 441035

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- The impact on pupils' learning of the introduction of the school's 'creative' curriculum.
- How well informed pupils are about how to improve their work.
- How the school meets the learning needs of the most able pupils.

Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, discussions with staff and pupils, scrutiny of documentation, and an analysis of pupils' work and parents' views. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school is much larger than most other schools of its type. Its status changed from a middle to a junior school in September 2007. The percentage of pupils eligible for a free school meal is much lower than usually found. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is a little below average, with very few speaking English as an additional language. The majority of pupils start at the school with attainment that is above average. The percentage of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who have a statement of special educational need is broadly average.

A breakfast and after school club based on the school site and managed separately was inspected at the same time.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The inspection agrees with the school's evaluation of its own performance, in that pupils thrive and achieve well in this good school. Some aspects of the school's work are outstanding. The school has embraced the change from middle to junior status successfully and is held in high regard by parents and the community. As one parent commented, reflecting the view of many, 'Avenue Junior is a fantastic school, with wonderful opportunities'.

When pupils leave at the end of Year 6 standards in English, mathematics and science are above average and the vast majority, including those who sometimes experience difficulty with learning, make good progress. This continues the picture of above average attainment and good, and occasionally exceptional, progress which has been consistently evident over recent years. At times, standards in English are well above average, such as in 2008 because of some excellent teaching and strong focus on pupils' speaking and writing skills. However, when compared with national averages there is a tendency for standards in science to lag a little behind those in English and mathematics. With this in mind, the school intends to embark on a review of the way in which it approaches the teaching of scientific investigation. Pupils do well in many other subjects, such as music, and information and communication technology (ICT). The achievement and learning of the most able pupils are promoted effectively. Teachers plan effectively to meet the needs of these pupils during lessons and they have access to challenging additional activities, for example, in mathematics and in preparing their magazine for publication.

Personal development and well-being are outstanding. Whilst successfully promoting pupils' intellectual development, the school does not lose sight of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural needs. Pupils clearly enjoy learning and their behaviour in lessons and around the school is excellent. Pupils are very committed learners who work hard unfailingly. They are exceptionally knowledgeable about the need to have a healthy diet, understand the importance of taking regular exercise and care greatly for the environment. The intellectual and social skills pupils acquire prepare them well for the next stages of their education and lay the foundation for their entry to the world of work.

Overall, teaching and learning are good. At times outstanding features are evident. Expectations of behaviour and pupils' progress are high and they respond well. As one pupil said about the teachers, 'They really work you hard; but you learn a lot'. Precise introductions to lessons ensure pupils understand what they are expected to do and are clear about their potential to achieve well. Because activities invariably capture pupils' interest, they effectively sustain their commitment to learning. Opportunities to learn independently or to work together in groups are embraced with great enthusiasm. Teachers assess pupils' progress accurately and frequently and pupils are often inspired to do well by the positive feedback they receive. This applies when teachers congratulate pupils for their efforts during lessons and in the marking of pupils' work, which is very helpful.

The curriculum is outstanding. The school has adopted a curriculum with an international dimension. Its powerful focus on developing pupils' creativity has provided them with a wide range of challenging and stimulating learning experiences. It is also very effective in linking together pupils' learning in different subjects. Pupils' learning also benefits greatly from the exceptional range of additional activities on offer and from educational visits and the contribution made by visitors to the school. Large numbers of pupils experience significant success in their participation in musical and in sporting activities.

Care, guidance and support are good, ensuring that pupils are able to learn in a safe and secure environment. Arrangements to track pupils' achievement and respond to any potential shortfalls in their progress are effective, as is the support for pupils who sometimes experience difficulty with various aspects of learning. Pupils are clear about what they need to do to make their work even better and the targets they have in English make an especially helpful contribution to this process. However, arrangements to set individual targets for attainment in mathematics and science are less effective and not developed to the same extent. Whilst parents are supportive, a number, in response to the inspection questionnaire, suggested the school does not do enough to seek their views or take sufficient account of their opinions. However, there is an effective range of mechanisms to do this, which the majority of parents feel work well, including the home-school liaison books.

The headteacher, deputy headteacher and staff with additional responsibilities provide good management and leadership and work as an effective team. Arrangements to set challenging targets, to evaluate the quality of provision and to respond to any weaknesses are effective. Leaders do much to ensure the school makes a positive contribution to the community it serves. Governors are very supportive and rightly proud of the school's good features. Many are regular visitors and are involved fully in evaluating provision. They are knowledgeable about the work of the school and, as representatives of the community, hold it to account for the good quality of education it provides. Their management of the school's budget and other resources is exemplary.

The continued professional development of staff is given a high profile. This helps them to keep up-to-date and contributes to a school that is constantly striving to build on existing good practice. Consequently, it has a good capacity for improvement in the future.

What the school should do to improve further

- Focus even more closely on the promotion of investigative activities in order that standards in science, whilst above average, reach the high level of those in English and mathematics.
- Extend the good practice for setting individual pupil progress targets in English so that it works equally effectively in mathematics and science.

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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/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	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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?	1
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	1
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**

23 September 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Avenue Junior School, Norwich, NR2 3HP

You may recall I visited recently to inspect your school. Thank you for being so helpful and for telling me all about your school. You and the vast majority of your parents and carers told me you think it is a good school. I agree.

Mr Zarins and his team, with help from the governors, all work hard to make sure you have all you need to learn successfully. This is shown by the good results you attain in the national tests each year. They also work very effectively to make sure you are safe and happy at school. This was very evident in the way I saw you enjoying your learning during lessons. Your behaviour and capacity to work hard is most impressive. Your new curriculum helps greatly with this and ensures that you are involved in lots of interesting activities. I was also delighted to see that many of you are involved in after-school and extra-curricular activities, particularly in music and sport.

As you mentioned, your teachers are good at giving you all the help you need. I was most impressed by the way in which they ensure that you know how to make your work even better and especially by the advice they give you when they mark your work. In order to make your school even better I am asking Mr Zarins and the staff to focus on a couple of things: they intend to look even more closely at investigative activities in science so that, whilst they are better than in many schools, standards reach the level of those in English and mathematics. They are also going to find ways of extending the good practice for setting you targets in English into mathematics and science.

I would like to finish by wishing you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Godfrey Bancroft

Lead inspector