

Colman Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120937
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	327394
Inspection dates	5–6 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Roger Brown

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)	224
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Myra Vogwill
Headteacher	Mrs Carolyn Sayer
Date of previous school inspection	23 November 2005
School address	South Park Avenue Norwich Norfolk NR4 7AU
Telephone number	01603 444201
Fax number	01603 444208

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is of average size, situated close to the centre of Norwich. It draws pupils from a mix of backgrounds. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage, but around one sixth come from a range of cultures, and most of these do not speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is above the national average. The school has a unit supporting deaf pupils, the numbers fluctuate, but currently there are just two pupils. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is greater than that found in most schools. The number who have a statement of special educational needs is much higher than usual. The spectrum of learning difficulties and/or disabilities is wide ranging and no single category predominates.

The school was an 8 to 12 middle school until 2007, then, along with other local schools, it was reorganised to become a 7 to 11 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

In 2005, when the school was last inspected, it was still operating as a middle school. At the time, it was judged to be good. In the transition to becoming a junior school, the strengths that characterised its previous existence have been maintained and at the same time, there has been a steady and thoughtful development of its work. Parents and the community hold the school in high esteem. They are proud of the diverse nature of its catchment. The school has a reputation for successfully accommodating and meeting the needs of pupils with a wide range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The proportion of these pupils in the school has grown, but the staff continue to meet their needs well. The strong teamwork of all the staff and very effective partnerships with other schools and organisations are notable features of the school. These factors, combined with the clear direction for the school's continued development, arising from the good leadership and management, mean that the capacity for further improvement is good.

Pupils achieve well. Standards at the school are above those found nationally, and the trend in the end of Key Stage 2 results over the last few years, with the exception of 2007, has been steadily upwards in all areas. Last year's Year 6 cohort attained especially good levels in English. This was partly as a result of the staff's concentration upon improving writing skills, but also arose from the continued strength in developing reading. The headteacher tracks and monitors the progress of pupils very carefully. She works with the teachers to ensure that all pupils make good progress during their time in school regardless of their background or starting points. The system works, but it is time consuming and heavily reliant on the headteacher's detailed background knowledge of the pupils. As such, it does not give staff sufficient incentive to develop their own initiatives that will build on and develop their pupils' achievements to an even greater degree.

The personal development and well-being of the pupils is good. They feel safe at school and are confident that staff will listen to them if they have any worries. Their behaviour is good, especially in the way they care and integrate everyone within their community. The good quality of the school's work in developing community cohesion is not just a result of the diverse nature of the intake. It also arises because the staff actively seek to develop and extend the pupils' horizons. This is achieved through the wide ranging after school clubs and sporting activities, and by exploiting their wide-ranging partnerships and connections. These include daily contact with the pupils at the adjoining special school, as well as international links with a school in Xuhui, China. Attendance is below the national average. Most pupils attend well, but a small number have poor levels of attendance.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers make good use of computer facilities to present information that captures pupils' interest and helps them to learn more effectively. The lessons are planned well; teachers design them to meet the specific learning needs of their pupils. Care, guidance and support are good. Those pupils who find learning difficult or who have disabilities achieve well because they receive good individual support. Staff are knowledgeable and skilful in their support for these pupils and ensure that, as far as possible, they are fully integrated into all aspects of the daily life and work of the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend the system to track and monitor pupil progress in order to develop a consistent whole school approach.

- Tighten up procedures to monitor and raise the level of attendance at the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Attainment and progress have continued to improve since the last inspection. Pupils start at the school with a level of attainment that is generally below that expected and assessment results indicate that it is well below that usually found in writing. Pupils of all abilities make good progress in their learning. There is no pattern in the school's assessment outcomes to show that any group of pupils is disadvantaged in any way. Standards in national tests for English, mathematics and science have risen from the average levels noted at the last inspection to above average now with the exception of those in 2007. It is clear that the issues the staff identified at the time no longer exist in the school. Indeed, as a result of the school's focus on improving writing, standards in writing improved notably in the 2008 end of Key Stage 2 national tests. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 in English, mathematics and science has increased each year, and are now at least in line, and at times above, the national averages in all subjects. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) have also improved and are now above average in Year 6. Pupils use their ICT skills competently in a number of subjects such as English and mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The pupils appreciate the fact that 'teachers trust us, care and listen to us'. As a result, the great majority of pupils are kind, courteous and polite. One or two do have issues, which mean that at times their behaviour is unacceptable, but any incidents are dealt with effectively. Pupils have a good understanding of the world's rich diversity. They enjoy taking on responsibility and willingly play their part in helping others. For example, some older pupils regularly help out at lunchtimes in the adjoining special school. The school council gives them a voice in making changes and improvements. There are good links to the local and international communities. Last summer, a group of pupils and staff spent a week on an intensive course learning about the language and culture of China to support their links with a Chinese school. The diverse nature of the school's catchment also helps them to gain a very good appreciation of, and respect for, other cultures and traditions. Pupils have a good understanding of the need to keep safe, eat healthily and exercise. Many participate in the wide variety of sporting activities on offer and there is a good uptake of places at the other clubs. Many visits and visitors introduce pupils to the wider world of work. Their good achievement and personal skills prepare them well for the next stage of their education. However, the level of attendance at the school remains below that nationally and that of similar schools. This is mainly due to a few pupils whose families do too little to ensure that they attend regularly. The school has procedures in place to deal with this, but so far, these have had too little impact.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Lessons are well planned and organised. The support staff are used to good effect to help individual pupils and small groups achieve well. However, when it is appropriate, teachers have

sufficient confidence in their knowledge and understanding of what they want their pupils to achieve to modify and adapt their lessons at short notice. For instance, one teacher altered their planned lesson to show their group a short video clip from the local TV news. This gave them some excellent insights and helped them to prepare for their own contribution to a formal debate. All teachers involve pupils effectively in lively question and answer sessions and pupils respond enthusiastically. Nonetheless, their response is even better when they get the chance to explore activities for themselves and carry out practical work. They recognise their learning is more effective and enjoyable when discovering new knowledge and skills in this way. Improved assessment procedures provide good information about the progress of individual pupils and groups. This is fed into the school's system for tracking pupil progress. The headteacher manages this system well and shares the information with teachers who then use it to plan teaching and learning. However, the process is very time consuming and not easily devolved to be managed by individual teachers and teaching assistants.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is extensively enriched by good quality additional activities. These include sport, music and languages which are often taught by specialists. Many visits and visitors add excitement to pupils' learning. The pupils see the residential visits as especially enjoyable learning experiences. Sufficient time is given to all subjects, ensuring the provision is suitably broad and balanced overall. The staff's effective self-evaluation process ensures the curriculum is evolving around the identified areas for development. These include the need for a more structured approach to the work in Year 3 and further improvements in the teaching of writing. There are a number of effective activities and processes that support pupils who are more able. Provision for ICT is good and teachers plan for its use well. The programme for personal and social education satisfactorily supports pupils' personal development. This is another area that is due to be expanded and developed in the near term.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care arrangements are good. Staff know the pupils well. Child protection and health and safety procedures are robust, as are the procedures to ensure that adults who come into contact with pupils are vetted appropriately. Pupils who have specific social, physical or educational needs are supported sensitively and, when appropriate, staff consult external agencies for their support. Pupils get good academic guidance and most have a reasonable understanding of their class targets. Their work is marked consistently and, as a result, most know what they need to do to improve. However, the lack of individual pupil targets means that at times, some pupils do not fully understand just what they need to work on to achieve even higher levels. There are good links with the main feeder infant school ensuring that pupils quickly and confidently settle in Year 3 and equally good links with the secondary schools ensuring that Year 6 pupils feel confident to move on.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher, staff and governors work hard to provide pupils with a calm, friendly environment where they feel safe and achieve well. Their effective teamwork and continued

hard work have ensured that, despite the major change to the nature of the school since the last inspection, almost all aspects of the school are now good. The leadership team has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school's work. Staff have the support and training they need to carry out their roles successfully. Teaching is monitored regularly, and teachers work effectively with the headteacher to monitor and develop pupil progress. Governors support the school well. They visit regularly and ask probing questions regarding developments. Partnerships with other schools at home and abroad, as well as work with community groups, are good. This aspect provides good support for curriculum enrichment. Relationships with parents are positive. The school, quite rightly, enjoys high regard in the area because of the effective way it embraces equally all the cultures and traditions represented there.

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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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
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 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**

9 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Colman Junior School, Norwich, NR4 7AU

Thank you for your warm welcome when we visited your school. I would like to share with you what we found out.

We had a very enjoyable time in your school. We were very impressed with how polite, thoughtful and caring you are. We think that the way you look after each other, and use your initiatives to care for the school and others, is splendid. We were also delighted to hear from you how much you enjoy coming to school.

We think that yours is good school and that it is continuing to get better. Practically all of your parents agree with us about this. They had almost as much to tell us about it as you did. The high standards you achieve are a strong reflection of all the hard work that you and your teachers put in. The improvements to the quality of your writing are very impressive. Well done; keep it up.

When we watched your lessons and looked at your work, we could see that your teachers and teaching assistants have some really great ideas to help you. However, we would like your headteacher and teachers to develop and improve the system they use to track your progress. At present this needs a lot of time and hard work. We believe that a more efficient system would help your teachers to identify exactly what each one of you needs to do to improve your work. This would then help you to achieve even higher standards.

One of the other things that impressed us were the many different activities and sports you can take part in. No wonder you told us you enjoy coming to school. However, we could not help noticing that a few pupils do not attend very well. If everyone of you who does attend well were to help and encourage those who struggle to come to school regularly, we think that they too would achieve as well as the rest of you. Do please help them.

Thank you once again for your warm welcome. All the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Roger Brown

Lead inspector