

Attleborough Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120926
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	332255
Inspection dates	18–19 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Ian Seath HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	412
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John McGuire
Headteacher	Mr Chris Read
Date of previous school inspection	8 January 2008
School address	Besthorpe Road Attleborough Norfolk NR17 2NA
Telephone number	01953 453491
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Age group	7–11
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Attleborough Junior School was placed in special measures at the last inspection in January 2008. In this inspection, pupils' progress and the standards they reached were judged to be inadequate, as were teaching and learning and leadership and management. Since then the school has had regular monitoring visits by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The school is a relatively large one with a lower than average proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils of minority ethnic heritage is much lower than the national average, as is the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school serves a mainly rural area with pockets of deprivation. When pupils enter the school in Year 3 their prior attainment is around the national average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with Section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. The overall effectiveness of the school is now satisfactory and the school has demonstrated a good capacity to improve.

Since the last inspection the school has improved quickly. This has been brought about because the headteacher and staff have quickly and accurately evaluated the needs of the school and have worked hard to ensure that the necessary changes have been made. During this time the school has been well supported by the local authority and governors. Many staffing and management changes have been made.

Achievements and standards are improving and are currently around national averages with improving trends in most areas. Progress made by pupils is satisfactory overall, but better in Years 5 and 6 and for those who find learning difficult. Teaching and learning have improved because the school has made planning more consistent and has placed an emphasis on the professional development of teachers and teaching assistants, including the sharing of good practice. The school's curriculum is satisfactory, and the school recognises that more could be done so that it effectively helps pupils to achieve better. Behaviour has improved markedly and is now good. The school is a much calmer learning environment than when last inspected.

Good care, guidance and support lead to good personal development and well being. Pupils are courteous and helpful with a good sense of right and wrong. Their confidence as learners is increasing both around the school and in class.

Leadership and management are good because they have successfully improved provision and achievement in a relatively short period of time. The school has an accurate view of its own strengths and weaknesses and has taken decisive action to address them where necessary. There is a common sense of purpose to improve the school. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school, and this is shared by staff. Increasingly, parents are positive and supportive.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the proportion of good teaching by ensuring that children of all abilities are challenged in class
- Improve progress in mathematics

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement and progress have improved since the last inspection and are now satisfactory. This improvement has resulted from the implementation of a comprehensive system for tracking pupils' progress, together with improved teaching. Teachers now have a very clear picture of the progress their pupils make and whether it is good enough. School data show that the rate of progress is increasing as pupils move through the school. Although there is a legacy of underachievement, pupils are catching up on lost learning in English and science. However, the school recognises the need to increase the rate of progress in mathematics further, especially for the more able pupils.

Standards are broadly average. Since the last inspection, the proportion of Year 6 pupils attaining the expected Level 4 and the higher Level 5 has increased. In science, the proportion of pupils

attaining the higher Level 5 is close to the national average but remains a little below in English and mathematics. Early indications from school data show continuing improvement except in mathematics in the current Years 5 and 6. The progress made by pupils who need extra help has improved since the last inspection and is now good. There are no significant differences between the achievements of boys and girls.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Their spiritual, moral social development and cultural development is good overall although the school recognises the need to further develop pupils' understanding of living in a multi-cultural society. Pupils have good relationships with adults and with each other, behaving well in lessons and around the school. They feel safe and report that any misbehaviour or bullying is dealt with swiftly and effectively. Behaviour in class is good and has improved markedly since the last inspection because the school's behaviour policy is now evenly applied. Pupils attend lessons with a willingness to learn. Attendance is average and pupils work well together. They are keen to take part in the range of school activities offered and enjoy their education.

Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and they put this into practice within the school environment. For example, cyclists usually wear helmets. They adopt healthy lifestyles and this is seen in the high uptake of sporting activities and their knowledge of what constitutes a healthy diet. The school's mixed boy and girl football team has recently won a community football cup.

Pupils take full advantage of the opportunities to take responsibility in the classroom and around the school although opportunities in the wider community are more limited. The school council members take their responsibilities very seriously. Pupils' preparation for their future studies is satisfactory with average skills in the core areas of English, mathematics and ICT and a satisfactory development of economic skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are solidly satisfactory. The school has demonstrated good improvement since the last inspection. In the better lessons, assessment information is used to ensure that work challenges and engages pupils well. Teachers share planning, and this has brought consistency across the school, as has improved monitoring of teaching and learning by senior managers.

Good relationships in the classroom between pupils and with adults creates an environment in which the pupils are ready to learn. Teaching assistants are used effectively to support pupils. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Better aspects in lessons include the increased amount of work suited to the individual needs of pupils, good use of information and communication technology (ICT) to stimulate interest and learning, and the effective involvement of the pupils in their own learning with the use of talking partners and self-evaluation.

The assessment of pupils' work is good, but marking is too variable. In the best examples there is a clear indication of how pupils can improve their work and there is evidence of pupils

responding to the comments. However there are inconsistencies so marking does not always enable pupils to focus on day-to-day improvements. The school recognises the need to introduce a more consistent approach to the teaching of handwriting.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and meets statutory requirements. The school recognises that links between subjects to enliven learning are at an early stage of development. Additional activities are provided through the links with sports partnerships, and pupils benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular clubs and residential visits. There are good opportunities for pupils to develop a sense of responsibility, for example, Year 5 pupils run the school fruit tuck shop and Year 6 train as peer mediators. Year 4 are eco monitors and check on class use of electricity and the amount of re-use and re-cycling. Since the last inspection, there are many more opportunities for pupils to develop skills in information and communication technology, resulting in standards that are now broadly average by Year 6. Theme days are thoroughly enjoyed by pupils and bring history topics to life.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care guidance and support of pupils are good. Arrangements for child protection and safeguarding are robust and meet statutory requirements. Suitable risk assessments are undertaken and acted upon. Individual pupils are well known to teachers. The pupils feel safe and there are good systems for supporting vulnerable pupils on a personal and social level. For example, special lunchtime activities are on offer to help them develop interpersonal skills. Pupils know that any incidents of bullying will be dealt with quickly and fairly. Transition arrangements for pupils moving into and out of the school are good and are appreciated by parents.

A good system of tracking pupil progress is in place and an analysis of that data is used to identify underachievers and put intervention strategies into place quickly. This is being used effectively by staff and as a result there is steady improvement in standards and the rate of progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress because their needs are carefully assessed and good support is put into place quickly.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management, at all levels, are good because the school has improved rapidly and has demonstrated good capacity to improve. Progress is improving quickly and standards have risen markedly since the last inspection. The headteacher, newly appointed at the last inspection, has worked closely with the local authority and his colleagues to quickly identify many of the issues confronting the school. Despite a legacy of low achievement and standards, actions taken have improved many aspects of provision. Progress and standards are rising, and teaching has improved so that it is more consistent. There is a significant number of good lessons. Leaders, managers and governors are now challenging poor performance effectively.

The monitoring of pupil progress has improved. Teachers share good practice better, and many have visited nearby high-performing schools to observe classes. The school has a broadly

accurate view of its own teaching and learning, although the lesson observation system does not place sufficient emphasis on the learning taking place in class.

Many staffing changes have taken place since the school was placed in special measures. The new staffing and management structure is almost complete. Middle managers are well supported and have clear roles. They are more accountable and use information better to both analyse performance and set precise targets. The monitoring of performance against targets has improved, but is still uneven across the school. Staff feel well supported, and this is evident in the energy with which they are tackling school improvement. Communications are good and morale is high. Teachers are appropriately qualified and resources are at least good across the school and are managed safely and efficiently.

Governors fulfil their role well. They are well informed about the performance of the school. For example they effectively monitor the performance of different groups and ensure that policies are kept up to date. The school meets requirements for race relations. Governors have demonstrated a willingness to challenge poor performance, and bring a good range of skills to the school. Partly because of this, the school has demonstrated good partnership working with other institutions, for example with feeder infant schools and the secondary school to which most pupils progress. The school's contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory overall. Whilst it is good locally, the international dimension could be extended further. Based on the current satisfactory standards, the school has demonstrated satisfactory but improving value for money.

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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?	3
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?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
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	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
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?	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?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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**

20 March 2009

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Attleborough Junior School, NR17 2NA

As you will know, I visited your school earlier this week with two other inspectors. We talked with many of you, sat in on all of your classes, and met with your teachers. Throughout this you were polite and helpful, and I would like to thank you for that. You are a credit to your school.

You will know that the last inspection placed your school in special measures because it needed to make many improvements. I am very pleased to be able to tell you that we have now taken the school out of special measures because it has quickly improved to the point where it does not need them. You have played a part in this, so well done.

The headteacher and his staff have many plans to make the school continue to improve. Teaching has improved, and so has the progress you make. You told us that you are well cared for and we agree.

We have asked the school to put extra work into making sure that all of you are challenged in class so that you find the work more interesting. The school also needs to improve mathematics, and has already started by the appointment of a new leader for this subject.

The school needs your help with these improvements. You need to make sure that you ask if you are not sure about something, and always make sure that you are clear about what you need to do to improve. You told us that bullying is rare. You can help keep it that way by talking to an adult if you are affected.

Once again, thank you and we wish you well.

Yours faithfully,

Ian Seath

Her Majesty's Inspector