

West Earlham Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120958
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	332278
Inspection dates	2–3 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Godfrey Bancroft

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)	182
Appropriate authority	Interim executive
Chair	Mrs Anne Gibson board
Headteacher	Mr Tony Hull
Date of previous school inspection	8 March 2007
School address	Scarnell Road Norwich Norfolk NR5 8HT
Telephone number	01603 454569
Fax number	01603 454652

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a junior school of average size. Pupils come from a range of economic and social backgrounds, but the percentage eligible for a free school meal is very high. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and the percentage who speak English as an additional language are relatively low. The percentage of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with statements of special educational need is very high. Attainment on entry is usually well-below average and, at times, very low.

Following the inspection of 8–9 March 2007 the school was made subject to special measures. As part of a local authority programme of re-organisation for education in the area, the school became a junior school in September 2007. Before that time it was a middle school, providing for pupils in the 8–12 years age range. Education in the area is under discussion for further re-organisation, although no final decisions have been made about the form this might take.

The school is currently led by a partnership headteacher, who also manages another nearby school. Whilst further re-organisation is pending the work of the school is overseen by an interim executive board.

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. Since being placed in special measures the school has made significant improvement in all aspects of its work, to the extent that it is now provides a satisfactory quality of education, with some features of provision that are good. This is because it benefits from strong and effective leadership provided by the headteacher who is supported well by a very experienced deputy-headteacher and by other senior managers. Their work, in turn, is underpinned by that of a knowledgeable and perceptive interim executive board who, whilst being very supportive are rigorous in holding the school to account for the quality of its work and for its continued improvement. The school has well structured plans to continue the push for even higher standards and maintain the current rate of improvement. Many parents now hold the school in high regard and one commented, 'My son has special needs and this school is working wonders for him.'

Pupils achieve satisfactorily and many, including some of those who sometimes find learning a challenge, are starting to make good progress, often from very low starting points. Standards have improved dramatically, to the extent that at the end of Year 6 they are currently on course to be broadly average. This improvement is partly brought about because pupils' personal development and well-being is good. Attendance is above average, having risen markedly due to the school's concerted efforts to emphasise the importance of regular attendance. Pupils behave well. They are enthusiastic learners who are eager to contribute during lessons, responding well to the encouragement they receive from their teachers. As one pupil commented, 'Lessons are fun and our teachers are helpful and supportive'. Even so, whilst pupils' speaking and listening abilities are improving there are times when their low levels still curtail the rate of progress, particularly for younger pupils. It also helps that care, guidance and support are good. Pupils feel safe in school and teachers ensure that pupils are well-informed about their progress and how to make their work even better.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, but in several parts of the school good and sometimes outstanding teaching is having a positive impact and promoting rapid improvements. Pupils' progress in lessons and over time is assessed accurately and subsequent stages in learning are matched closely to their needs. The increased emphasis on practical activities makes learning exciting and captures pupils' interest. Whilst pupils spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory, many pupils are not sufficiently aware of the wider community and do not understand the nature of modern multi-cultural Britain to the extent that they should. The curriculum is satisfactory and rightly focuses on the development of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy that pupils need to move forward.

The proven track record of senior managers for promoting rapid improvements and in bringing the school out of special measures indicates that the ability to sustain improvement in the future is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Consolidate the emerging good progress that pupils are making in each year.
- Improve the quality of pupils' speaking and listening skills, especially in Years 3 and 4.
- Raise pupils' awareness of the wider community and of the multi-cultural nature of modern day Britain.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Progress over time is satisfactory, with an increasing number of lessons in which progress is good. In 2008 standards, as shown by the unvalidated results of the national tests for the end of Year 6, were well below average and standards in English lagged behind those in mathematics. The effective work of senior managers and teachers means this position has been totally eradicated. The school's accurate assessments, the work seen during lessons and the work in pupils' books, show that standards in the current Year 6 are on course to be broadly average. These standards are considerably better than 2008 and many pupils show good progress from their starting points. Standards in English, mathematics and science have all improved and assessments show that those pupils currently in Years 3, 4 and 5 are on course to do even better. The school has a much higher percentage of pupils with learning difficulties than usually found and many of these pupils are also making good progress. Systems to track pupils' progress are good and this means any who might possibly fall behind are identified at an early stage and given the help they need.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school and grow in self-confidence. They respond positively to the effective strategies in place to celebrate their achievements. Pupils talk enthusiastically about all the opportunities the school offers and the fun they have. This love of school is one of the reasons why pupils' attendance has improved and is now above average. Pupils are friendly and courteous. Behaviour in lessons and around school is good. Most pupils get on well together but some playground behaviour is boisterous at times because there is not always enough opportunity for taking part in more purposeful games and activities. Opportunities for pupils to use their initiative and become independent learners have increased. Pupils and adults respect each other and this supports learning well.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory, although pupils' knowledge of communities outside their immediate locality is limited. Pupils say they feel safe in school and they are confident that adults listen to and resolve any personal concerns they may have. Older pupils know about healthy lifestyles but younger pupils are less sure about how to stay healthy. Pupils take part in two hours of physical activities each week, which include swimming for one year group each term. Pupils get the chance to contribute their views on how to change the school through the school council. They contribute to the local community and raise funds for national charities. A greater focus on raising standards in literacy and numeracy and improvements in pupils' access to computers is preparing them suitably for their future learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Whilst teaching and learning are satisfactory, during the inspection some teaching in English and mathematics was judged to be outstanding. Many of the features introduced to improve teaching are starting to have a positive impact, whilst others, such as arrangements to improve pupils' speaking and listening to the standard needed require more time to have their full effect. Teachers have consistently high expectations of how pupils will behave and respond.

Relationships between teachers and pupils are positive and pupils appreciate the fact that their efforts are recognised and celebrated. As they gain confidence pupils are increasingly willing to take chances. They are not afraid of sometimes getting things wrong because they know teachers and teaching assistants are on hand to help them. Work is matched accurately to pupils learning needs and abilities and is based on rigorous assessments. Teachers often split learning into relatively small, manageable sections which helps pupils to sustain their concentration. Teachers assess pupils' work accurately and frequently. They involve pupils well in assessing and understanding the progress they are making. They also make sure that pupils are clear about what they need to do to improve their work and marking often provides pupils with good advice.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. There is a clear focus on developing and using basic literacy, numeracy and scientific skills. The school is now making learning more enjoyable developing meaningful links across subjects and giving more opportunities for pupils to be creative. Provision for information and communication technology is good. The school modifies its curriculum effectively for those pupils who sometimes find learning hard so that they consistently experience success. The 'Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning' project has good impact on pupils' personal development and on their understanding of how to keep safe. The school provides a varied range of after school activities, including sport, which enriches pupils' learning and provide many opportunities for personal success, contributing to high levels of enjoyment and good personal development. A residential trip for older pupils extends their outdoor learning experiences and adds another dimension to pupils' learning. The spacious library is inviting with good quality books to inspire a passion for reading.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils feel happy and safe because the school provides a very caring and supportive environment that contributes well to their good personal development. Appropriate procedures are in place for safeguarding pupils and these comply with the latest government requirements. 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. The school uses a wide range of support programmes and frequent opportunities to work in small groups to help these pupils. As a result, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive the help that they need to enable them to make satisfactory and for some good progress. There are very effective measures to promote good attendance. These measures have resulted in a marked improvement in attendance.

Each pupil has their own challenging targets in English and mathematics and knows what they need to do to improve. They have a clear understanding of how they are doing and are very keen to make their work even better. Good tracking systems are understood by staff and provide the information needed for them to match work closely to pupils' needs.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher, the deputy-headteacher and senior managers provide effective management. They all help to ensure that the performance of the school is evaluated accurately and are involved fully in bringing to fruition the plans for continued improvement. Part of this process involves setting suitable challenging, but realistic targets for pupils' attainment, which this year the school is on course to meet successfully. The process of recruiting suitably able teachers is also proving to be successful, resulting in the improved rates of pupils' progress and the higher standards they are attaining. Subject leaders also play an effective role in supporting their colleagues and promoting improvements in standards.

Members of the Interim Executive Board have considerable expertise. They work effectively in providing support for the school, evaluating the quality of provision and in identifying what the school needs to do to become even better. Its members represent the best interests of the community well. With this in mind, the school has evaluated the quality of provision and is planning to do more to raise pupils' awareness of the multi-cultural nature of modern Britain.

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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	3

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	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
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	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**

4 March 2009

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of West Earlham Junior School, Norwich NR5 8HT

Thank you for talking with us and being so helpful when Mrs Davies and I visited to inspect your school recently. We were pleased to hear that you and many of your parents and carers greatly appreciate the quality of the education you receive. We think your school provides a satisfactory education. It is improving quickly and is without doubt a much better school than at the time of the last inspection.

Your hard work and good behaviour are paying dividends. Some of you are starting to make good progress. Because of this the standards you attain are getting closer to those expected for pupils of your age. We were delighted to hear that you feel safe at school, enjoy your lessons and appreciate the help you get from your teachers and other adults. We were also very impressed by the way in which Year 6 pupils help the younger ones with their reading. One of the reasons you are doing so well is that your teachers are good at advising you how to improve your work. They also provide you with praise when you do well and this is clearly motivating you to do even better.

Mr Hull, Mrs Elliott and the staff are working tirelessly to make your school even better. With this in mind we are asking them to –

- Help you to maintain the good progress that some of you are currently making.
- Help you to make your speaking and listening even better, especially those of you in Years 3 and 4.
- Raise your awareness of the wider community and of other cultural groups who live in Britain today.

I hope continue to enjoy your learning and wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Godfrey Bancroft

Lead inspector