

Northfield Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112685
Local Authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	337988
Inspection dates	17–18 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Jackie Barnes

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 of pupils on the school roll	113
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Emmens
Headteacher	Rebecca Timperley
Date of previous school inspection	4 December 2006
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors, including one for a half-day. Approximately one third of the time was spent observing learning. Six staff were seen teaching during the eight lessons visited. Meetings were held with governors, the headteacher, pupils, the local authority School Improvement Partner and school staff. The school's work was observed, and documentation considered including: the improvement plan, assessment information and the tracking of progress, pupils' work, and 55 parental questionnaires together with those from pupils and staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- how well last year's improvements in the attainment and progress of the pupils have been maintained
- the effectiveness of the assessment systems for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- the continuity of the pupils' learning from year to year
- the impact of the small leadership team on the school's improvement.

Information about the school

This smaller-than-average school of its type mainly serves its local residential area. A minority of pupils travel from a wider area. The social and economic circumstances of the locality vary but are average overall. Entitlement to free school meals is increasing but remains below average. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average and includes a wide range of needs. Since the last inspection, the school has undergone a period of uncertainty when a proposal for closure was issued and later withdrawn, and there were major changes in staffing and leadership. The staffing is now stable and a substantial refurbishment is in its final stages. There is on-site childcare provision for Nursery children, although this is not managed by the governing body. The school recently received the National Healthy School's Award.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The school has successfully undertaken a wide range of developments since the last inspection. It is a happy place in which pupils enjoy learning and make good use of the wide range of activities that enhance the curriculum. They are well behaved and take care of each other. Typical of the way parents and carers and pupils feel about the school's provision of good care and support was a pupil's comment that, 'I feel safe because we all know each other, and everyone feels like my family.' Most pupils attend well and there is good support for the few pupils for whom absence is a concern.

When pupils start school in Year 3, their attainment is above average overall, although there is a wide difference between individuals. This difference is partly because there are many pupils who have significant special educational needs and/or disabilities in learning. This group of pupils make suitably brisk progress with good and, occasionally, outstanding teaching and the attention of qualified support staff and external agencies. As a result, their attainment is often better than similar groups nationally. Although the progress of other pupils across the ability range varies considerably, by Year 6 attainment is above average with the more-able pupils being particular successful. Pupils' personal skills develop well from year to year. They are keen to learn, cooperative and know how to have fun. Their knowledge of how to keep safe and healthy is good and most make sensible decisions about eating and exercise. They are proud of their school. Older pupils have mature attitudes and those who have responsibilities are conscientious.

The school has a positive atmosphere for learning. Relationships between staff and pupils are a strength of the school. The positive encouragement for pupils to participate actively in lessons gives them the confidence to contribute their ideas and suggestions in class discussions and when working with a partner. Teachers use interesting resources to maintain pupils' motivation, including imaginative use of the electronic whiteboards to provide the visual reinforcement that enhances learning. Teachers know their subjects well. Teaching points have a clear sequence, activities are well prepared and lessons are often lively and have a good pace. Assessment procedures have improved since the last inspection, and staff know the pupils well. The school's accurate self-evaluation has rightly identified that improvements in assessment systems are not yet having a full impact on the achievement of all pupils. Although pupils are more assured about what they need to do to improve their work, the planning of learning and progress in lessons does not consistently identify what is expected of different groups. As a result, a small minority of pupils find their work too hard or too easy, and the information needed to check their progress is not always clear. Consequently, they do not reach the targets set for them.

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The headteacher has set a clear direction for improvement, and worked closely with the staff team to create a shared commitment and strong drive to achieve this. The leadership and management of teaching and learning have improved but are not yet fully supported by the school's assessment system. The school's self-evaluation is wide-ranging and generally accurate. As a result, the school has extensive plans for further development although the main priorities are not yet agreed. Significant improvements have been made in the areas of weakness identified in the last inspection: attainment has improved, the curriculum has been enhanced through a wide range of well-attended clubs and sports, and links with the wider community have strengthened. Given its strong track record, the school's capacity to sustain improvement is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the progress of those pupils who are not meeting their targets, giving particular attention to:
 - the continuity of pupils' progress from year to year and between staff teaching the same pupils
 - increasing the rigour of the analysis and the use of the school's tracking data to inform the leadership about pupils' progress and attainment.
- Ensure the teachers' planning of work clearly identifies what pupils across the ability range are expected to learn, giving particular attention to:
 - extending the range of teaching strategies in regular use to support the learning planned for individuals and groups of pupils
 - checking all pupils have the right level of challenge in lessons.
- Refine the school development plan so the main priorities are clear, giving particular attention to:
 - providing clear criteria to measure success to enable progress to be checked
 - clarifying the role of staff with responsibilities and the governing body in leading and managing the plan.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils are enthusiastic about learning and clearly enjoy their activities. Although their independence in developing their own work is sometimes limited, their personal skills, good standards in literacy and numeracy, ability to work with others and above-average attendance provide a good basis for the next stage of their education. They are proud of their involvement in the school community, especially their work for the school council and on environmental issues. Pupils are tolerant, have a strong sense of justice and fair play, and treat each other with respect. They are aware of the economic issues that affect the local and school community, and are sensitive to the implications.

The school's results in the 2009 national tests for Year 6 were significantly above the

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national figures for the first time in recent years, with attainment best in English where close to half the pupils achieved the higher Level 5. Currently, the school's progress tracking system, together with pupils' work in lessons and books, indicate overall attainment in Year 6 is above average. The progress of many pupils has begun to accelerate and is good overall, although the extent of improvement varies between year groups, subjects and individuals. As a result, a minority of pupils in all year groups and across the ability range have not met their targets in writing and mathematics with the exception of Year 6. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities who have regular support from specialist staff make good and, sometimes, excellent progress in relation to their abilities. The variability in progress through the school is mainly because the planning for learning in lessons does not use assessment information to identify clearly enough what is expected of pupils of different abilities. As a result, the teaching and tasks, although enjoyable, occasionally do not promote their progress strongly enough.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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Teaching has improved since the last inspection and good teaching is clearly evident in most lessons, which is enabling many pupils to increase the pace of their progress especially in Years 5 and 6. Behaviour is well managed, lessons are active and interesting, and pupils are motivated and keen to succeed. Lessons usually have a brisk pace and purpose, often with imaginative use of the school's good curriculum to provide a theme which effectively supports learning in more than one subject. Although the pupils' involvement in developing their own learning is not evident in all year groups, the younger pupils are well supported in developing these skills, as they demonstrated when they researched the wives of Henry VIII, and presented their findings to the class. Teachers are skilful at questioning pupils in class lessons, ensuring all pupils receive attention at some point. Improvements have been made in using assessment information to build on pupils' previous learning, and while this works for most pupils, it is not totally successful as yet. Full use is not always made of the different teaching strategies that would help staff to provide the sustained teaching that individuals or small groups sometimes need to make their best progress. Care, guidance and support are good for all pupils and especially for those who are particularly challenged in their ability to learn, although support for gifted and talented pupils is not yet fully developed.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The school has been well led through difficult times to its present stable position. Links with parents and carers are strong and their confidence in the school is clearly evident. The staff team is small but works well together, with all carrying significant responsibilities. At present the headteacher is the only substantive senior leader, with temporary support to manage assessment arrangements recently arranged. Plans are in hand to make an additional permanent appointment to the senior leadership team in the near future. For pupils with the most significant special educational needs and/or disabilities, leadership is good. The school successfully promotes equal opportunities for all pupils, giving access to all the school offers with good support for the most needy. Attainment data are scrutinised to check for any discrimination between different groups and action taken when needed. Gifted and talented pupils have good access to suitable out-of-school challenges but such support in school is less well established. Community cohesion within the school is good, and work is currently underway to extend the context to wider local and global communities. The school development plan is not

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sufficiently clear about the main priorities, and how those involved will know when issues are successfully resolved. However, the headteacher has recently undertaken a comprehensive check of the school's effectiveness, taking account of a wide range of views. As a result, the school has a good basis for agreeing the current priorities. Due attention is given to keeping pupils safe and safeguarding procedures are in place although the responsibility for reviews is not clear. The governing body has supported the school with exceptional persistence and has shown the ability to make difficult decisions. Individual governors know the school well and, although the school improvement plan sometimes lacks the information they need to raise challenging questions, they regularly raise issues as well as encourage.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents' and carers' questionnaires show strong support for the school. They particularly value the headteacher's support when they have concerns and the positive encouragement their children receive, especially those who are vulnerable. Most parents and carers who responded say their children enjoy school, and the children say the same. Inspectors' findings confirm these views. There was no particular trend in the few less positive comments. All were offered constructively and have been shared anonymously with the headteacher.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Northfield Junior School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 55 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 113 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	36	65	18	33	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	41	75	12	22	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	35	64	17	31	1	2	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	32	58	23	42	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	32	58	22	40	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	33	60	21	38	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	34	62	21	38	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	27	49	24	44	2	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	32	58	22	40	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	27	49	23	42	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	31	56	22	40	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	35	64	19	35	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	36	65	18	33	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



Friday 19 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Northfield Junior School, Dronfield, Chesterfield S18 2ED

Thank you for making me so welcome when I inspected your school recently and for completing your helpful questionnaires. You helped me to see how well behaved you were and how keen you are to learn. I was pleased to see that you take good care of each other, and have confidence in the staff to take good care of you and keep you safe. The teaching in your school is good and you say the staff are always willing to help you in lessons. Your attainment by the end of Year 6 is above average and some of you make exceptionally good progress. The progress that a few some of you make is a little too slow and so you do not quite meet your targets. You clearly enjoy school and most of you have good attendance records. You especially like being with your friends and the practical activities you have in most lessons.

There are some aspects of your school that could be even better, so I have asked your headteacher and governors to do the following things:

- to make sure that you all meet your targets and that they are just the right level of challenge for each of you
- to improve the planning of your learning in lessons so that you know what is expected of you and your teachers can check accurately that you have succeeded
- to make much clearer the main priorities for the next stages of the school's improvement, and check that everyone understands what they need to do.

You can help by continuing to work hard, behave well and look after each other.

Yours sincerely

Jackie Barnes

Lead inspector

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