

Sprowston Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120852
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	339790
Inspection dates	19–20 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Jill Bavin

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	238
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Wilde
Headteacher	Janine Wye
Date of previous school inspection	8 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 13 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and evaluated the school's data on pupils' attainment and progress. Inspectors examined the procedures for keeping pupils safe, plans for school development and 101 parent questionnaires.

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

- what the school is doing to raise standards, especially in writing and science
- whether there are outstanding elements of personal development to be celebrated
- how consistently teaching challenges higher attaining pupils
- how effectively the curriculum engages boys
- whether staff and governors share an understanding of issues facing senior leaders, and are clear on how to tackle them.

Information about the school

The school became a junior school in September 2007, so pupils currently in Year 5 are the first year group to have joined the school in Year 3. At this time the deputy was appointed to the headteacher's post and a new deputy was appointed. The school serves a suburban area of Norwich in which the proportion of minority ethnic pupils is lower than is typical nationally. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is significantly higher than average. The percentage of families entitled to free school meals is below average and rising. School awards include Healthy Schools and Eco-Schools status.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. It has several strengths, mostly relating to the good quality care and support that pupils receive, and their personal development and well-being. A noteworthy feature, much appreciated by parents, is the extent to which pupils willingly embrace healthy lifestyles. Good care contributes to pupils feeling safe in school.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. While individuals and cohorts vary, typically pupils reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 6 in English, mathematics and science. The school has recovered from a drop in standards in 2009 when girls reached broadly average standards but boys' attainment was well below average overall. Boys' and girls' work is at expected levels for their age and pupils in Year 6 are already on track to reach broadly average standards in all tested subjects in 2010. This represents satisfactory progress given their starting points.

Measures introduced by the current headteacher, based on an accurate evaluation of the school's work, are having a positive effect. The school is on an increasingly firmer footing because she has established a sharp focus on pupils' progress each term and teachers are held to greater account in contributing to good achievement. The recent upturn, reflects the school's work over the last two years, and contributes to the school's sound capacity for further improvement. More needs to be done, however, to accelerate pupils' progress so they achieve well, especially in writing. Individual writing targets are not being used systematically to raise standards, and a whole school approach to 'talking before writing' is at a very early stage of development.

Learning is improving because the headteacher has established a far greater use of assessment information which contributes to teachers' planning more effectively for different groups of pupils. This strengthening of teaching and learning is a further indication of the school's secure capacity for continued development. During the inspection several good lessons were seen and there were examples of good marking in books. Nevertheless, there is more to be done to ensure greater consistency in challenge for all pupils, including the most able, and sharing with pupils exactly what is expected of them. Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities are supported effectively and make similar rates of progress as their peers. The school takes great care to support pupils with particular difficulties; consequently there are examples of individual pupils who make outstanding progress emotionally and socially. It is to the school's credit that pupils who receive free school meals achieve well overall.

The curriculum works well in successfully motivating all pupils, including boys. Work is often practical and makes interesting links between subjects. These features, together

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with good provision for sports and arts, contribute to pupils' good level of enjoyment, good attendance and enthusiastic response to healthy lifestyles. The chair of governors supports the headteacher well and governance is sound overall. Senior staff, subject leaders and teachers share a common sense of purpose supportive of the headteacher's ambition for the school. They are increasingly leading areas of school improvement, but the school remains overly dependent on the headteacher for many initiatives to be implemented consistently.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards and achievement in writing by:
 - ensuring that staff and pupils use writing targets more consistently and frequently in a variety of subjects
 - embedding plans to extend pupils' opportunities to articulate their ideas before writing.
- Increase the amount of good and better teaching and learning to at least 80% by:
 - increasing teachers' expectations, ensuring that pupils' work is more challenging more often, especially for higher attaining pupils
 - giving pupils clearer next steps more consistently in lessons and in books
 - share best practice more consistently.
- Increase the extent to which subject leaders and senior staff actively contribute to school improvement.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Boys and girls, including minority ethnic pupils, and the very small proportion learning English as an additional language, make satisfactory progress overall. Most pupils now make good progress in reading. A higher proportion of pupils reach the higher level because reading material is well-matched to individual needs. Achievement is improving, particularly in Years 4 and 5. While progress in lessons remains uneven it is satisfactory overall because learning is increasingly effective. Writing remains a weaker area in pupils' work. The full impact across the school of developments in assessment, and teaching has not been felt in relation to writing standards.

Pupils contribute to their learning effectively by behaving and participating well in lessons. For example, pupils in an upper mathematics set made good gains in calculating areas and perimeters of increasingly complex, compound shapes because they approached the well-pitched challenge positively. A class of Year 4 pupils made good gains in formulating and refining thoughtful questions of a role-played 'victim' of theft, in preparation for writing a newspaper report.

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Sports activities are popular and participation is high. Pupils respond positively to the school's efforts to encourage healthy eating. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development remains good because of their willingness to adopt roles of responsibility, including environmental work. Pupils readily embrace the diversity represented within the school community, although their understanding of non-European cultures is too limited.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
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	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is satisfactory overall and several good lessons were seen. These featured staff making effective use of practical activities and a good level of pupil involvement. The use of more practical approaches to learning is helping to inspire teaching strategies and so lift the quality of teaching. For example, pupils with special educational needs and disabilities learnt well alongside their peers in a Year 3 science lesson. Here, well-timed questions, while pupils used mirrors to investigate their teeth, helped all groups of pupils to learn well. 'Deliberate error' strategies in using multiples of two on the interactive white board increasingly promoted gasps of realisation, much active

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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participation and a good rate of learning in a Year 3 mathematics lesson. Questioning does not always include all pupils and more able pupils spend too long completing the same tasks as their peers before being given more challenging work to do.

There has been much effective work in introducing topics into the curriculum which have resulted in pupils' enjoyment and promoting their well-being. This has helped to narrow the gap between boys' and girls' achievement. For example, in the early stage of a road safety project, boys and girls learned equally well when the teacher's skilful questioning supplemented the practical design and technology skills required for their puppet making. Pupils from all ethnic backgrounds have equal opportunities to participate and succeed. A wide variety of over-subscribed clubs and special events are much appreciated by both pupils and parents. A pastoral care manager and teaching assistant provide well-focused extra support for the most vulnerable pupils, which contribute to individual pupils making impressive gains in social skills.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	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 headteacher has a clear and accurate view of the school's existing strengths. She has prioritised developments successfully. She has established herself as an effective leader whose work, including effective links with parents, is valued by pupils, parents and staff alike. The leadership team and subject leaders are increasingly taking responsibility. Data about each pupil's performance is analysed and increasingly teachers are held to account, to improve teaching and pupils' achievement. The chair of governors has an astute understanding of the challenges faced by the school, and provides good support. Staff are enthusiastic about working together to seek school improvement. Senior staff and class teachers do not consistently reinforce those day-to-day messages that indicate high expectations to pupils. Nevertheless, the leadership team is fully committed to the headteacher's vision, developing steadily and recognising the value in sharing good practice, especially to increase challenge for more able pupils. Staff are successfully working together to narrow the gap between boys' and girls' achievement.

Governors are well-organised and discharge their statutory duties conscientiously. They contribute to the sound safeguarding procedures found at the time of the inspection. Half of the governing body are relatively new and still developing a full role in school evaluation, preparing governors for having a greater influence on school development.

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They are supportive of the school's planned approach to community cohesion. Work to ensure that the school community is harmonious is largely successful; pupils report very little evidence of bullying or racism and feel a sense of belonging and pride in their school community. Pupils are developing an interest in communities beyond their own, for example by linking with 'pen-pals' in Eastern Europe. The school recognises that this is 'work in progress'; links with other communities nationally and more systematic evaluation of the impact of the school's work are identified next steps.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
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	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
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	3

Views of parents and carers

Almost half of parents completed the questionnaires. Most parents appreciate the school's work and their views are similar to those of inspectors. Within the few responses that indicated concerns, the area of greatest concern was that the school dealt effectively with unacceptable behaviour. During the inspection behaviour was managed effectively. The most consistent strengths, valued by the overwhelming majority of parents, related to the school being well led, taking good account of parents' concerns and the extent to which the school helps pupils to have a healthy lifestyle.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Sprowston 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 101 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 238 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	61	60	38	38	1	1	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	53	52	45	45	3	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	41	41	57	56	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	39	39	57	56	4	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	46	46	53	52	2	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	37	37	60	59	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	39	39	60	59	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)	41	41	47	47	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	38	38	57	56	0	0	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	31	31	57	56	7	7	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	35	35	61	60	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	51	50	46	46	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	55	54	42	42	2	2	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.



23 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sprowston Junior School, Norwich NR7 8EW

Thank you for all your help when we inspected your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you very much. My colleague really appreciated hearing from the School Council about the positive work it is doing. I should like to particularly thank those pupils who brought their work to show me, and all the children I spoke with in the playground and the lunch hall.

We are glad that you enjoy school so much, and that you get on so well together. We were very pleased to see how well you accept responsibilities and how mature you are in your approach to caring for the environment. You told us that you particularly like the variety of sporting opportunities and other clubs and activities. We agree with you that the variety of activities available to you all is good and an important feature in how much you enjoy school and learning. We are pleased to see how enthusiastically you exercise, and how much you understand about keeping healthy. It was good to hear how safe you feel, and to see how well you behave in lessons.

We are very pleased that you are making the progress you should in English, mathematics and science, but we do think that you could do even better, especially with your writing. We have asked the headteacher and staff to:

- make sure the work is always hard enough to really stretch you, especially those of you who find learning quite easy, and to make sure you know what you need to do next.

We have also asked them to make sure that you know your writing targets and remind you of them whenever you are writing, even in other subjects such as science and history; and give you even more chances to talk through ideas before writing.

We have asked the staff to help the headteacher by coming up with even more of their own ideas.

You can help by continuing to behave well in lessons and letting teachers know if you need more guidance or a bit more of a challenge.

Yours sincerely

Jill Bavin

Lead Inspector

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