



# Thorpe Hamlet Middle School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 120955  
**LEA** NORFOLK LEA  
**Inspection number** 280927  
**Inspection dates** 13 June 2006 to 14 June 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Mr. Andrew Matthews AI

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Wolfe Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		NR1 4HT
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	8 to 12		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01603 433014
<b>Number on roll</b>	164	<b>Fax number</b>	01603 701464
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Cllr.Barbara Hacker
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	2 December 2002	<b>Headteacher</b>	Miss. Sarah Shirras

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a smaller than average sized middle school for pupils in Years 4 to 7, which serves an area of Norwich with some significant social deprivation. The great majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. A small number of pupils are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. An above average number of pupils have free school meals. The number of pupils with special educational needs is average overall. Attainment on entry is below average. The school has had a high turnover of headteachers in recent years, with the new headteacher, who took up her appointment in September, being the fifth in seven years. As part of a reorganisation of education by Norfolk local authority, the school will become a junior school in September 2007 and move into a purpose built new school the following year. The school has achieved 'Healthy School' status.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Inspectors agree that Thorpe Hamlet Middle is a satisfactory school that has made sound improvements since its last inspection. It has not been a smooth ride for the school as standards have been well below average up to 2005. However, the new headteacher has worked successfully with the local authority (LA) to address weaknesses and improve the school's provision. Regular monitoring has led to improvements in pupils' progress particularly in Years 6 and 7 where there is a noticeable increase in the number of higher attaining pupils. Pupils now achieve satisfactorily overall, although standards in English, mathematics and science are still below average, in part due to the high proportion of older pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Teaching is now satisfactory and some of it is outstanding. However, not enough opportunities exist for all teachers to observe this outstanding practice. Whilst pupils' work shows that teachers have raised expectations of what they can achieve, teachers' marking has some weaknesses. Pupils are well cared for in an environment where they feel safe and confident. Their parents are highly supportive of the school. Despite the school's best efforts attendance remains well below average. The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The new headteacher leads the school well and has introduced improvements in several key areas. Governance is good. Governors have a clear knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school knows itself well and inspectors agree with its evaluation in most areas of its self-review, except for achievement and standards. In this section inspectors felt the school's judgement (based on last year's results) was too harsh and judged achievement and standards to be satisfactory, taking into account this year's assessments. The school is in a good position to continue its recent improvements and gives satisfactory value for money.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science.
- improving attendance;
- Improve the quality of teaching by creating time for the outstanding teaching practice to be shared.
- Ensure teachers' marking informs pupils how they can improve their work.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is below average. Year 6 pupils' national test results in 2005 showed that attainment was well below average. However, much more rigorous tracking and evaluation of pupils' progress have been piloted in the present Years 6 and 7 classes. Teachers now match their work much more accurately to the pupils' needs. Although Years 6 and 7 standards are still below average overall in English, mathematics and science, many more pupils have made good gains in their learning and are on course to meet their challenging end of year targets. There is also a noticeable increase in the proportion of higher attaining pupils. Standards in

information and communication technology (ICT) are satisfactory. There is little significant difference between the overall attainment of boys and girls. Pupils in Years 4 and 5 are also making better progress because of improved planning and better challenge for individual pupils. In mathematics, the more able pupils in Year 4 are making particularly good progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities receive well focused support which enables them to be fully included in lessons and make good progress towards their individual targets. Similarly, newly arrived overseas pupils who do not speak English as their first language make good progress because the school tailors its support effectively for them.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development is good overall. They understand how to keep safe. They are happy, enjoy being at school, get on well together and are keen to learn. Behaviour is good and pupils with challenging behaviour are effectively managed. The school has improved attendance slightly since last year but it is still well below average. This is mainly because of a small number of pupils with significant attendance problems. The school rightly spends much time giving pupils a strong moral and social grounding, with an appropriate emphasis on helping them understand what is, and is not, acceptable. Staff successfully develop pupils' expectations and self confidence. Pupils greatly enjoy the excellent range of lunchtime clubs and enthusiastically develop new interests such as, gardening and knitting. The school places great emphasis on encouraging a healthy approach to life. Pupils have a growing understanding of a good diet clearly shown in the uptake of the school's own fruit scheme. Whilst not all pupils admit to enjoying the twenty minutes of exercise which precedes each day, most recognise its relevance to their general fitness. Pupils make a clear contribution to the life of the community. The headteacher, for example, regularly consults pupils about school matters and the school council is beginning to influence a growing number of aspects of school life, such as the range of clubs and the changing role of the school tuck shop. Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of business skills to benefit them in later life. They acquire key skills, such as in reading and numeracy adequately.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Some is outstanding. Most lessons are planned around clear objectives for pupils to learn. Teachers use questioning effectively to deepen pupils' understanding and in the best lessons use pupils' responses to modify their teaching. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well so little learning time is lost. The range of planned activities generally challenges the range of pupils' abilities, but sometimes work set is the same for all pupils and lacks a challenge for the more able. The best lessons are delivered at a good pace and encourage pupils to think independently and reflect on their learning. However, with a clear focus on raising

standards further, the school is rightly seeking ways to improve the quality of teaching further to ensure pupils of all abilities are consistently challenged and enthused and achieve to their full potential. There are too few opportunities for teachers to see each other at work in order to share outstanding practice. The role of teaching assistants has been reviewed and changed. They now have time to review pupils' progress with teachers and this is resulting in them having a greater impact on pupils' learning. Assessment of pupils' standards of work and progress is satisfactory and improving because of the school's participation in a national initiative to raise standards. Assessment has been used particularly successfully in Year 6 to pinpoint pupils' weaknesses that have been addressed in the teachers' subsequent lesson planning. This successful model is to be used more widely in other classes next year.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is satisfactory and is being improved to address pupils' needs more accurately. For example, the personal, social and health education programme is to be revised, taking much closer account of local social circumstances. The headteacher is rightly encouraging a more flexible approach to lesson planning that takes more account of pupils' interests and future learning needs. For example, the Year 6 mathematics and English curriculum has been successfully adapted, based upon a clear evaluation of pupils' strengths and weaknesses. This is an effective model for others to follow. The school rightly recognises that more effective links are needed between subjects and that ICT is not yet fully integrated into all aspects of pupils' learning. The curriculum for Year 7 pupils is enhanced by good links with the local upper school and participation in a music project for Year 5 pupils. Pupils also take part in residential trips. The headteacher is committed to ensuring all pupils have the chance to participate, regardless of financial circumstances. These trips are complemented by local visits where the richness of the city and the local environment is used well as inspiration for work in ICT, design and technology and art. The curriculum is further enriched by an outstanding range of lunchtime extra-curricular activities, run by the skilled, dedicated team of teaching assistants. These activities encourage pupils to be healthy and develop a strong interest in sports and the arts.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The good quality care for children, some of whom are vulnerable, is a strong feature of school life. Staff have successfully created a secure, supportive environment where the pupils' welfare and pastoral needs are sensitively catered for. Child protection work is expertly overseen and staff are vigilant. Much time and energy are expended on helping keep pupils safe and secure. For example, there is a trained counsellor to whom the children are discreetly directed when problems arise. Links with supporting agencies are used increasingly to support both pupils and vulnerable families. The quality of guidance for pupils is satisfactory but improving. Targets for English and mathematics have been introduced to help pupils focus on what they need to learn

next. However, teachers' marking does not consistently inform pupils about the next steps needed to help them reach these targets.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Whilst the school's leadership and management are satisfactory overall there are encouraging signs that they are beginning to have a positive impact on the school's provision. The new headteacher provides astute leadership which is helping to raise standards and improve the personal development and well-being of the pupils. The headteacher has worked effectively with the LA to address the weaknesses of the last inspection and improve pupils' progress. Subject leaders for literacy and numeracy are becoming more effective at tracking pupils' progress and addressing identified weaknesses. The drive to improve standards further is clearly reflected in the make up of the new leadership team for next year. The school's commitment to staff development is recognised in the enthusiasm and skills of the teaching assistants. Teachers have little time to see their colleagues' best teaching. The school has good self-evaluation procedures although the involvement of pupils and parents in this process is in the early stages. The school knows its strengths and weaknesses well and priorities in its present improvement plan are relevant to its current needs. The school benefits from its membership of the local cluster of schools. Resources are being developed carefully to meet the pupils' learning needs. Governance has remained good and governors provide a well informed, critical challenge to the school as well as giving knowledgeable support in areas such as finance, curriculum and personnel. Their work has made a significant contribution to recent developments and the school's good capacity to improve further.

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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	NA

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

### **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for being so welcoming and helpful when we came to inspect your school. We really enjoyed talking with you and watching you working with your teachers. It was good to speak with your teachers about your work. We also enjoyed watching you take part in the large number of lunchtime clubs. We think that your school does many things well, but there are a few things it needs to do better. What is good about your school - You really enjoy school and most of you work hard. - Your behaviour is good and you get on well with each other and your teachers. - Your headteacher is doing a good job. She knows how to make the school better for you. - Your teachers and teaching assistants look after you really well. - Those of you who find work hard are getting the right sort of help and you use it well. What we have asked your school to do now - Make sure your work improves in English, mathematics and science. - Let other teachers see you working in your classrooms. - Ask teachers to write more comments in your books to help you improve your work. - Encourage the small number of you who often miss school to come to school more regularly.