

John Grant School, Caister-On-Sea

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121265
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	339906
Inspection dates	25–26 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Sue Aldridge

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	3-19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	120
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	20
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sue Humphrey
Headteacher	Mr Gerald Hampson
Date of previous school inspection	21-22 June 2007
School address	St George's Drive Caister-on-Sea Norfolk NR30 5QW
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors who spent roughly half of their time observing learning. They saw 10 lessons, of which two were joint observations. They also conducted two learning walks, one with a member of the senior management team. 11 different teachers were observed. Inspectors held meetings and discussions with staff, pupils, a speech and language therapist and governors, including parent governors. They observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documents, including policies and records associated with safeguarding arrangements. They analysed assessment data, records of pupils' progress, case studies and information linked to the school's self-evaluation. A total of 58 completed parental questionnaires were scrutinised, as were those from staff and pupils.

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

- whether the provision for pupils with autism enables them to achieve as well as other groups of pupils
- the quality of cross-curricular provision for communication, mathematics and information and communication technology
- the impact of specialist status on outcomes for pupils.

Information about the school

The school caters for pupils with complex needs, including severe learning difficulties and profound and multiple learning difficulties. An increasing proportion of pupils have autism, currently almost half in the school and well over half in the primary classes. All but a very small number who are being assessed have a statement of special educational needs. Pupils are of predominantly White British origin. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. Boys outnumber girls by more than two to one. John Grant was designated as a Specialist Sports College with a supplementary specialism of science in July 2009. It has a number of awards that recognise the range and quality of its work, including Eco Schools and Healthy 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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This successful school has improved considerably since the last inspection and its overall effectiveness is now good. Sharper self-evaluation has enabled the school to identify precisely where weaknesses lie and actions taken have been effective in securing the necessary improvements. This is particularly evident in the accelerated progress made by pupils with autism. Their progress lagged behind that of others a year ago but the school has narrowed the gap and the great majority now make similar progress to others. There are also suitable plans to develop provision further, including discrete provision for a small proportion of pupils who need specialised teaching approaches. Planning for this involves a wide range of partners, all of whom have relevant expertise. Teaching is good, and so pupils make good progress. Individual needs are met well, and parents recognise and welcome this. For instance, one typically noted that the school has 'transformed my son's educational experience'.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get a good start because the provision here is good. The outdoor area is small and lacks cover so it cannot be used in all weathers. Across the school, teachers plan effectively so that tasks, methods and resources are well matched to pupils' abilities, and they make good use of the school's range of different facilities to provide small group teaching in suitable rooms, such as sensory areas. However, they do not always identify measurable and different learning outcomes for each group. Teaching assistants lead groups well. Suitable praise gives pupils a clear idea of how well they are doing in lessons and is effective in motivating them. In the sixth form, students are involved well in their learning but lower down the school practice is not yet consistent. As a result, pupils are not always aware that they have reached a target or what they need to do to improve. Although pupils achieve well, this is not fully reflected in the accreditation on offer and the school recognises the need to extend this, particularly for higher attaining pupils.

Funding for specialist status has been used effectively to secure additional staffing and thereby widen the range of experiences that the school provides. Pupils have a very good awareness of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. Sporting opportunities are outstanding and participation rates in this are very high. There are well over two hours of physical education each week and a wealth of additional extra-curricular opportunities for sports and dance, with performance of the latter in the wider community as part of events such as inclusive arts festivals. Good arrangements for keeping pupils safe are reflected in high levels of parental and pupil confidence that

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the school is a safe environment. Productive links with a wide range of agencies add to the school's good arrangements to care for, guide and support pupils and their families. Pupils and students contribute well to the school and wider communities. They develop their basic skills well, acquire independence and life skills, enterprise skills and awareness of the world of work so they are prepared well for adult life.

Accurate self-evaluation and the wide range of improvements secured since the last inspection show that the school's capacity to improve further is good. However, at present it does not have a means of comparing the performance of the youngest children and that of students in the sixth form with that of similar groups in other schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the provision so that:
 - lesson plans identify measurable learning objectives that are different for pupils of different abilities
 - all pupils know when their targets have been reached and are aware of what they need to do to improve
 - the range of accreditation reflects fully the achievements of pupils of all abilities.

- Strengthen the school's capacity to improve by:
 - developing a means of comparing the performance of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and students in the sixth form with that of similar groups.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Almost all pupils enjoy school. Boys and girls, and those with different needs achieve well. They have good relationships with staff and are keen to please. Their good attitudes to learning mean that they apply themselves well during lessons, remain focused and do their best to complete tasks independently. They are pleased to answer questions when they can, and they persevere with tasks although occasionally they do not ask soon enough when they need help. Those with profound and multiple learning difficulties co-operate well with the adults that support them. Communication skills are encouraged effectively, and so pupils learn to make signs, recognise symbols and use symbol cards to make their feelings and needs known to staff. They make effective use of new technology to learn and access tasks, such as finding out about Sikhism from video clips or using a switch to operate a 'smoothie' maker. Pupils with autism mostly respond well to the strategies used by staff to engage them, and other pupils are tolerant when there are occasional outbursts, which are short-lived. Behaviour is good, and this contributes to the good learning that occurs. Attendance is average. There is no unauthorised absence but, inevitably, pupils with medical conditions do have spells of absence.

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Pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They grow in self-confidence and self-esteem because there are good opportunities for their personal and academic achievements to be recognised. The school council is influential. For instance, at their request visitors are shown around school outside of lesson times only. Pupils are polite and respectful, showing good tolerance and understanding of one another’s needs. They learn enthusiastically about the cultures and customs of others. The school is cohesive community with a strong sense of common values. When pupils raise funds for charities at home and abroad, staff ensure that they understand what life is like for the recipients and what differences aid will make to their lives. Pupils are enthusiastic ‘eco warriors’ and take on a good range of responsibilities, including maintaining the school’s ‘worm hotel’ and recycling waste.

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	*
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	1
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	3
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Staff skills are developed well, so they make use of suitable methods and resources to enable pupils to learn. They manage pupils skilfully and show a thorough knowledge and understanding of pupils’ individual needs. There is sensitive preparation of pupils with complex needs at the start of lessons, ensuring that they are comfortable and positioned well for learning. Recent appointments include secondary subject teachers, who make effective use of the school’s specialist areas for science and design and technology, for instance. Full use is made of the splendid sports hall to enable pupils to experience a very wide range of activities as well as

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

*In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils’ age.

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prepare ambitious dance routines for public performances. The development of a dance studio and fitness suite is planned to enhance these facilities.

Support staff are well-briefed and deployed effectively to support and engage pupils in learning. Staff encourage pupils’ understanding successfully by making good use of sensory approaches, where pupils explore different smells, sounds, tastes and textures. Communication and mathematical skills are encouraged well across all subjects, but occasionally teachers miss opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology as an alternative means of recording. Although there is much good practice, teachers are inconsistent in identifying precise learning outcomes and ensuring that pupils always know what they have achieved and what they need to do to improve. As well as excellent provision to encourage healthy lifestyles, the school offers many opportunities for enrichment. It also extends its expertise and facilities to other schools, by training staff from other schools in teaching physical education to pupils with autism, for instance. Evaluations show that this is well received.

Good quality care is much appreciated by parents. Staff work effectively with a range of other agencies to ensure that pupils and families have the support that they need. Strong links with Connexions mean that pupils have good guidance as they get older and they are fully involved in annual reviews and planning for their futures.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
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?

All those with leadership responsibilities are effective in driving school improvement. The headteacher has strong vision for the school as a centre of excellence and he is well supported by a skilled deputy headteacher because they have complementary skills. Governors are very supportive and contribute well to the direction taken by the school. They strongly represent parental interests and make suggestions for changes. For instance, at their suggestion a holiday play scheme was launched; a parent governor has evaluated this and lessons learned are to be fed back to the full governing body. Improved self-evaluation since the last inspection has enabled the school to diagnose exactly where weaknesses lie, such as in scientific enquiry, and take action to rectify this. However, the evaluation of performance of the youngest and oldest students has yet to be fully developed.

Safeguarding arrangements are robust. Staff are well trained in all matters, including

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child protection and physical intervention, and record-keeping is good. Governors ensure that recruitment procedures assure pupils’ safety. The curriculum provides good opportunities for pupils to learn how to keep safe.

The school’s commitment to equality of opportunity extends beyond its campus, through outreach activities, to bring physical education and sports activities to a range of pupils in other schools. Mainstream staff acquire new skills and their pupils are provided with enhanced opportunities. At home, the school carefully analyses the performance of different groups of pupils and takes suitable action to ensure that all achieve equally well.

The development of community cohesion has been carefully considered and forms part of the school’s development plan, which is fully linked to the school’s self-evaluation. Provision ensures that pupils have a good understanding of the school as a community, the wider and global communities and that they contribute well to all of these.

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	2
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Effective links with families prior to children starting school help children to settle quickly. They clearly feel safe and confident and they are well cared for. Thorough assessment gives staff a good idea of children’s capabilities and this information is used well to plan suitable activities across all areas of learning. Appealing activities like ‘a picnic on the moon’ are planned around topics such as ‘Space’, and there is a good balance between sessions led by staff and play-based lessons when children are able to choose from a range of enjoyable activities. The discrete outdoor area is used effectively but it is small and lacks cover so it cannot be used in all weathers.

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There is good teamwork by staff. All contribute well to children’s learning by encouraging communication skills through the use of spoken language, signs and symbols, for instance. They record in detail the children’s responses. Children willingly take responsibility as the ‘special helper’, they make healthy choices at snack time and learn the importance of keeping clean, such as wearing protective clothing when taking part in messy activities. Because teaching is good, children make good progress in all areas of learning. There is additional support for those with autism, such as from a speech therapist, so these children make similar progress to others. The enthusiastic and knowledgeable coordinator has accurately identified ways of improving the provision. Children’s progress is carefully measured and monitored, but at present the school has no means of comparing children’s performance with that of children in similar schools.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Sixth form

Transition into the sixth form is well managed, and students are fully involved in making decisions about this step and destinations at 19 years-of-age . The discrete, purpose-built accommodation includes a large common room for students and provides a distinctly different and more adult environment. The experiences provided prepare students well for adult life. As teaching is good, students make good progress and most achieve the challenging targets set for them. They are involved well in planning and assessing their work, and take responsibility for ensuring that there is suitable evidence of their achievements. The school has recently changed the means of assessment and accreditation, so it does not yet have an appropriate means of comparing the progress made by students with that of students in similar settings. Students have considerable responsibility in the school and make a strong contribution within it and in the wider community. For instance, they collect, store and sort the school’s paper for recycling and work in local schools as sports leaders. They build well on their existing skills through enterprise activities, and some acquire recognised qualifications in first aid. Students with complex needs are well supported, and all are encouraged effectively to be as independent as possible. They are carefully prepared for leaving school and all go on to placements where they continue to learn and develop.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
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Taking into account:	2
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

In a relatively high return of parental questionnaires, parents are very positive about the school. They find that children ‘come on in leaps and bounds’ in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Those that made comments often praised the support provided for them as well as pupils. A very small number feel that communication could be improved, but inspectors judge this to be good nonetheless. Parents have particularly high levels of confidence in the school’s care for pupils with medical needs, which helps to reduce absences.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at John Grant School, Caister-On-Sea 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 58 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 120 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	34	65	15	29	2	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	39	75	12	23	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	34	65	17	33	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	29	56	20	38	2	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	36	69	14	27	2	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	26	50	23	44	3	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	29	56	23	44	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)	29	56	18	35	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	35	67	17	33	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	30	58	17	33	3	6	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	29	56	21	40	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	32	62	19	37	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	35	67	16	31	1	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 all 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 pupils' 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.



Monday 1 March 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of John Grant School, Caister-On-Sea, NR30 5QW

Thank you for making us welcome at your school. We enjoyed our visit. The dancing display in assembly was great!

These are the good things about your school:

- You are learning well and making good progress.
- Behaviour is good.
- You have lots of exercise to make you healthy.
- The sports hall is very good.
- You feel safe.
- You suggest ways to make the school better.
- You help in lots of ways in school.
- You raise money for poor people in other countries.
- You recycle waste.
- You get on well together.
- The staff teach you well.
- They take good care of you.
- The staff and governors all help your school to get better.

Things that need to improve are:

- Teachers need to make sure they can find out exactly what each of you learns in each lesson. They need to let you know what this is and what you need to do to improve.
- All older pupils should get awards for the things they learn.
- The school should be able to find out how well the children in Reception and those in the sixth form are doing.

We wish you all well.

Yours sincerely

Sue Aldridge
Lead inspector

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