

# Hylton Castle Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	108832
<b>Local authority</b>	Sunderland
<b>Inspection number</b>	377823
<b>Inspection dates</b>	1–2 February 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Carol Gater

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	274
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Joan Low
<b>Headteacher</b>	Elaine Armstrong
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	17 September 2008
<b>School address</b>	Cramlington Road Sunderland SR5 3QL
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## Introduction

### Inspection team

Carol Gater  
John Pattinson  
Wendy Richardson

Additional inspector  
Additional inspector  
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 19 lessons and parts of lessons taught by 12 teachers. In addition, discussions were held with groups of pupils, parents and carers, staff and members of the governing body. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including pupils' work in books; information that related to pupils' achievement; the school's development plan; monitoring records and safeguarding policies. They analysed 95 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, as well as taking account of those completed by pupils and staff. Inspectors were unable to take account of responses to the online parent questionnaire (Parent View) when planning the inspection as insufficient responses had been received.

## Information about the school

The school is larger than the average sized primary school. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is more than twice the national average. The proportion of pupils who are disabled and those who have special educational needs is also above the national average. Since the previous inspection, the school has experienced a number of staffing changes. The school meets the current floor standard, whereby the government sets the minimum expectations for attainment and progress. The school has achieved Healthy School status and the Anti-Bullying Silver 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

<b>Overall Effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key Findings

- This is a good school. Pupils enjoy their lessons and say that 'teachers make learning fun through interactive and practical activities'. They feel that the school keeps them extremely safe and this is consistent with the views echoed by parents and carers.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are given a good start to their learning and make good progress from their exceptionally low starting points. Attainment at Key Stage 1 is now improving rapidly. By the time pupils leave Year 6 their attainment is broadly average. In 2011, the percentage of pupils reaching Level 4 in both English and mathematics was above that nationally. Although more pupils are now reaching the higher Level 5 by the end of Year 6, this is less evident in writing.
- Teaching is good overall and a major strength is the support that teachers give pupils to improve their work. As a result of focused interventions by teachers and well-trained teaching assistants, all groups of pupils are making good progress in mathematics and reading. There are examples of pupils who are disabled and those with special educational needs making outstanding progress.
- The vast majority of pupils behave well and feel safe. The school has good systems in place to support those who find it difficult to manage their own behaviour.
- Good leadership and management are particularly evident in the way in which early intervention and good partnerships with parents and carers and external agencies, provide effective support for pupils' personal and academic development. Since the previous inspection, a concerted drive by school leaders, has led to an improvement in pupils' attainment and progress. Accurate self-evaluation informs current actions to further raise attainment. This, along with the high expectations of all staff, gives the school good capacity for further improvement.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further raise pupils' attainment and accelerate their progress, particularly for the more-able in writing, by:
  - sharing effective practice between staff so that teaching is consistently good or better
  - ensuring that planning for extended writing across the curriculum is a greater focus for all teachers
  - ensuring that assessment information is used to plan activities that always challenge potential high achievers.

## Main Report

### Achievement of pupils

Pupils' good attitudes contribute effectively to their learning. They settle well to their work, are keen to do their best and take a pride in their presentation. They speak with enthusiasm of their new 'topic' approach to learning. In a Year 6 class, pupils wrote at length to present arguments for changing the times of the school day. They were doing so with first-hand knowledge from their partner school in Germany. This topic approach has brought about an overall improvement in writing, particularly in accelerating boys' progress. However, a lack of planned opportunities for extended writing tends to limit the progress of those pupils who are more able.

Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has risen considerably overall since the previous inspection, because of a rigorous focus on monitoring and on improving the quality of teaching and learning. Focused, targeted support from teachers and well-trained teaching assistants has ensured that pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable are now attaining higher than these groups nationally. All groups of pupils now leave the school having made better than expected progress from their starting points. Parents and carers rightly acknowledge this. Some pupils who are disabled and those with special educational needs make outstanding progress.

When children join the school in the Early Years Foundation Stage, many have exceptionally low skills in speech and language, as well as in their social and emotional development. They thrive in the caring, positive environment and make good progress, but enter Year 1 still below national expectations. They make good progress as they move through the school to Year 6, where overall attainment is in line with the national average. Historically, progress in Key Stage 1 has been slower but it is now rapidly accelerating. Currently, attainment in Year 2 is in line with that nationally including in reading. Lively teaching and concentrated work on letters and their sounds is driving this improvement. Through small group and individual support, pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 practise building up words, persevering until they can read them. More pupils are reaching the higher levels in reading, which means that attainment in Year 6 is now above average in

that subject. Older pupils talk enthusiastically and knowledgeably about their favourite authors and read a variety of different texts.

### **Quality of teaching**

Teaching is good overall with some outstanding features. Comments from parents and carers show that they agree with the inspection findings. Pupils recognise the high expectations that teachers have and respond well to them. Relationships are good and all teachers in the school model positive behaviour. They use praise effectively and this raises pupils' self-esteem. There is a strong focus on developing speaking and listening skills and acquiring new vocabulary. As they move through the school, pupils develop the confidence to express their opinions and to perform in front of others. In an assembly, older pupils presented the Ten Commandments in a modern day setting and conveyed the importance of respecting and tolerating others. This exemplifies their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Teachers make lessons enjoyable and practical, as in Year 5 and Year 6 science lessons where pupils had the opportunity to investigate reversible and irreversible changes. They were absorbed in the investigation, working cooperatively and testing their own scientific hypotheses. Pupils grasped the concepts involved because the teacher prompted them to think creatively and to explain their reasoning. In another lesson, a teacher fully engaged Year 2 pupils in their learning, by using extra-large 'sentence-checking' glasses to spot mistakes she had made. Opportunities to write at length are well planned and modelled in some classes, but, in others, opportunities to extend writing are missed. When this occurs, pupils, particularly the more able, do not practise their skills enough to develop fluency in their writing.

Teachers' subject knowledge is good. Where teaching is good or better, teachers skilfully use their assessment of where pupils are in their learning to plan activities that meet the needs of all abilities. In a few lessons, assessment is not used well enough to ensure that activities challenge all learners. Pupils know their targets and are keen to achieve them. Where teaching is good very specific marking and on-going feedback provide pupils with points for improvement. Pupils are very much involved in their own learning and reflect on how well they have done. Independent learning is encouraged and this was seen in a number of reading sessions where pupils were engrossed in their books or using laptops to research information.

Communication and liaison with teaching assistants are good. This results in effective support that is accelerating the progress of pupils who are at risk of underachieving, or those who are disabled and those who have special educational needs.

The curriculum has been changed to take account of pupils' interests. This has allowed teachers to be more creative and imaginative, linking subjects into meaningful learning experiences. The strong focus on teaching basic skills regularly, and through different contexts, has had a positive effect on pupils' good progress in these areas.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Behaviour observed in lessons and around school is good. The vast majority of parents and carers agree with inspection findings that behaviour is typically good and that their children are safe. A few parents, carers and pupils expressed concerns about behaviour. Discussions with pupils and other inspection evidence indicate that the school immediately addresses any instances of poor behaviour. Pupils comment on how behaviour has greatly improved over time and are knowledgeable about different types of bullying, of which they say that there are now very few instances. The school council has been instrumental in achieving the school's anti-bullying award. Pupils are very willing to take on responsibilities, such as monitors, buddies and members of the school council. They are polite and considerate to each other. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, for example, one child quickly offered to help another put on an apron before painting.

Pupils say they feel very safe in school and are confident that an adult will sort any problems they may have. 'Worry boxes' enable pupils to share concerns in confidence. Pupils are aware of how the curriculum helps them to understand unsafe situations through, for example, visitors such as lifeguards, police and firemen and through courses, such as cycling proficiency and e-safety. Attendance has improved over time, and is currently slightly above average. A governing body pilot scheme has forged better links with parents and carers and this is having a positive effect on attendance.

## **Leadership and management**

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have a clear vision to drive school improvement. Actions taken so far have been effective in securing good teaching, which has successfully closed the gap between the attainment at the school and the national average. Effective systems are in place to monitor and evaluate pupils' progress. Well-planned professional development sessions have increased staff knowledge and expertise. Although the school has plans for teachers to share good practice, this strategy has not yet been used to full advantage to improve the consistency of the quality of teaching of writing.

The curriculum is good. It is tailored to meet the needs of all groups of pupils; it is flexible enough to allow creativity and personalisation but focuses strongly on the teaching of basic skills. It is enriched by visits and visitors that broaden pupils' experiences and their understanding of the world. There are many opportunities for pupils to participate in extra-curricular activities. As such, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

The school has developed good relationships with parents and carers, providing very strong support for pupils and their families when necessary. Any barriers to learning are swiftly identified and appropriate external agencies contacted. There are good opportunities for parents and carers to see how well their children are progressing, as in the sharing of 'Learning Journeys' in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The governing body has made an effective contribution and provides good challenge and support. Members of the governing body are involved in monitoring activities

and are fully aware of the school's strengths and areas for development. They are proactive with regards to ensuring safeguarding requirements are fully met and that all relevant training has been completed. The school provides a very safe environment for pupils in its care. The school promotes equal opportunities well and tackles discrimination through raising pupils' expectations and ensures that all individuals have the opportunity to achieve well. Teachers and teaching assistants effectively support individuals and small groups of pupils in their academic and emotional development. The determination and commitment of all staff, together with the improvements that have been made since the previous inspection, give the school good capacity to improve even further.



## 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**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.**



3 February 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Hylton Castle Primary School, Sunderland, SR5 3QL**

Thank you so much for making us welcome when we inspected your school. We enjoyed talking to you in lessons and hearing you read. Please thank your parents and carers for sending us their comments. The large majority were very complimentary about the school.

You go to a good school that has improved since its last inspection. Teachers make sure that you are well cared for and support you in your learning. You told us that you feel very safe because of this. Your behaviour has improved and is now good overall. This has helped you to make good progress. Teachers make your lessons lively and interesting and you enjoy learning through topics, such as 'The Chinese New Year' and 'Our European Friends'. You know what to do to improve your work because your teachers give you very clear points for improvement when they mark your work. We were very impressed to see how much you enjoyed writing in your topic books. Even the young children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are proud of their 'Transformers' notebooks.

We have asked the headteacher and teachers to help you make even better progress by planning more challenging activities that allow you to complete longer pieces of writing, especially for those of you who find learning easier than most.

You can help by following the good advice on how to improve your writing. We are certain that some of it will be selected for your Golden Learning journals. Keep collecting the tokens for good work and good behaviour!

We wish you all every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Carol Gater  
Lead inspector

