

Regent Farm First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108440
Local authority	Newcastle Upon Tyne
Inspection number	377754
Inspection dates	31 January 2012–1 February 2012
Lead inspector	Susan Waugh

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	283
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Enid Mitchell
Headteacher	Deborah Ashcroft
Date of previous school inspection	25 November 2008
School address	Wansbeck Road South Gosforth Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE3 3PE
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Introduction

Inspection team

Susan Waugh
Diane Coleman
Frank Cain

Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed 18 lessons taught by 11 teachers. They also observed a part of a one-to-one special support session plus a group of sessions promoting pupils' understanding of the links between letters and sounds. The inspectors also listened to individual pupils read and talked to different pupils about their learning. They also scrutinised work in pupils' books alongside a member of staff. In addition, there were discussions with pupils, members of the governing body, staff and parents and carers. The inspectors observed the school's work and examined a range of documentation, including the school's information records relating to pupils' achievement, leadership and management, monitoring and evaluation evidence, behaviour records and safeguarding. They also took into account the questionnaires returned by 63 parents and carers and 37 pupils. No responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) were available to aid inspection planning.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average-size first school. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage and the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is similar to the national average. About one quarter of pupils are at an early stage of learning English which is an above average proportion. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is almost twice the national average. The percentage of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average. The school has an Additionally Resourced Centre (ARC) for pupils with sight impairment. The movement within the pupil population is more fluid than in most schools.

The school holds a number of awards including an International schools award, Eco-Schools silver, Primary Quality Mark and the Activemark. The governing body manages a breakfast and out-of-school club.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good school. Pupils from many different backgrounds work and play together very well to create a harmonious school community. Parents and carers overwhelmingly agree that all groups of children feel safe and confident in school. An atmosphere of mutual respect between adults and children results in pupils behaving well because they enjoy school and have a positive attitude to learning.
- The achievement of visually impaired pupils is excellent by the time they leave the school. All other groups of pupils make good progress overall, including those children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. There is some variation in rates of progress, where pupils do not have enough opportunity to practise independently what they have been taught.
- The school effectively teaches pupils to read and fosters very well a love of and interest in reading through carefully chosen topics which feature well-known authors.
- The quality of teaching is good overall with some outstanding teaching, which moves learning along at a rapid pace, keeps pupils active and challenges them to think deeply. However, teaching is not yet consistently good because in a few lessons it is not always clear what pupils are expected to learn. This results in the work not being closely matched to pupils' abilities. Marking informs pupils what they have done well but does not always indicate what needs to be done next to help pupils improve.
- The quality of leadership and management is good. Regular monitoring and accurate evaluation of the strengths of teaching and learning are leading to increasing rates of progress throughout the school. Robust checking of pupils' progress enables the school to identify quickly any underperformance and provide sharply focused programmes of intervention and support. Self-evaluation is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all teaching is consistently good or better by:
 - making it clear what pupils will learn in all lessons
 - always providing sufficient opportunities for pupils to practise independently the skills they have been taught
 - consistently matching work accurately to pupils' individual needs.
- Ensure that marking always provides feedback about what pupils should do next to improve their learning.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Since the previous inspection, the quality of learning has been improved through the introduction of systematic assessment, a vibrant 'child-led' curriculum and effective checking of pupils' progress. This results in pupils making good progress in the majority of lessons. When lessons are particularly imaginative and questioning is probing, learning moves along at an even more rapid pace. Accurate assessments ensure that pupils who are in danger of falling behind are provided with appropriate well-targeted interventions and support which ensure that they continue to achieve well. This is particularly the case for some pupils who spend part of the year abroad on extended visits to their family.

The imaginative and creative curriculum captures pupils' interest and enthusiasm and effectively adds to their skills and understanding. Many pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, are keen to discover more about their topic and they eagerly conduct research at home. In lessons, they willingly share ideas, speak increasingly confidently and listen carefully, such as in a mathematics lesson about symmetry which featured well-known paintings.

Until 2010, most children entered Nursery with skills which were below those typical for their age. Currently, children in the Nursery and Reception classes entered school with skills which are more typical for their age. From their starting points they make good progress because they settle quickly in the warm and friendly atmosphere. Skilful questioning results in children making good progress, such as learning about the properties of material when building houses for the three little pigs. Pupils make a good start with developing their reading skills, learning their letters and sounds through songs and well-thought-out activities. They write using these skills, either on a whiteboard or in Braille, with increasing confidence. As a result of the systematic teaching of reading alongside a keen fostering of enjoyment of books, pupils' attainment is broadly average in reading by the end of Key Stage 1.

By the time they leave school, most pupils achieve expected levels of attainment with many, including those who are visually impaired, exceeding those levels. Attainment is similar in all subjects, although more pupils reach a higher level in reading than in writing or mathematics. This represents good, and sometimes outstanding, achievement overall. All groups of pupils make progress at a similar rate. The support provided to disabled pupils and those with special educational needs ensures that they make good progress. Almost all

parents and carers agree that their children make good progress while they are at school and the findings from the inspection confirm this.

Quality of teaching

The very good relationships between staff and pupils provide the foundation for good teaching. Pupils are enthusiastic about learning because teachers work effectively to make lessons interesting, engaging and relevant. Teachers' good subject knowledge means they can ask searching questions which prompt pupils to think deeply about what they are learning. For example, Year 4 pupils were asked to identify the persuasive language in Martin Luther King's 'I have a dream' speech. This led to a thought-provoking discussion about racism in which all pupils participated and wanted to offer a viewpoint. Opportunities such as these, which foster pupils' good spiritual, moral social and cultural development, are common and are woven carefully into the curriculum. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, adults readily play alongside children, building on their interests and carefully extending their learning. Good liaison with staff in the out-of-school provision ensures teachers have a comprehensive picture of each child's capabilities and interests. Progress is most rapid when pupils are actively engaged in tasks that are well matched to their abilities, and learning builds through the lesson in a logical sequence. Explanations are clear and links are constantly made to the learning focus. Teaching assistants support pupils' learning well, both in lessons and when working with small groups on specific programmes. In the best lessons, they work seamlessly alongside the teacher, supporting a specific group but also enhancing the learning of the whole class.

Specialist teachers provide carefully tailored programmes and intensive one-to-one support for some pupils which successfully help them to catch up with their peers. Pupils with a visual impairment are expertly supported by very skilled and knowledgeable teaching.

Teachers' marking is regular and always informs pupils about what they have achieved. Pupils are also encouraged to reflect upon what they have learned. However, guidance to help pupils improve their work is not consistently provided to ensure everyone is clear about what they need to do next to make better progress. In the few lessons where progress is satisfactory rather than good, teachers spend too long talking to children and this results in too little time being devoted to practising skills. These lessons are also characterised by being too focused on what pupils are doing rather than what they are learning. This, in turn, results in tasks which are not well enough matched to pupils' individual needs.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The positive climate in the school is a result of pupils' good attitudes towards learning, an enthusiasm and interest in what is taught and a calm, consistent approach by adults. Any minor disruptions are dealt with firmly and quickly so that learning time is not lost. All pupils thrive confidently in the school and they report no incidents of bullying or other unkindness. Incidents of racism have been rare. Pupils are clear about what to do if any incident does arise. They cooperate extremely well with each other both inside and outside the classroom. They spontaneously applaud if someone has responded well to a question in lesson and show appreciation of each other's talents. The star of the week prize, recently donated by a former pupil, is a valued award.

Inspectors concur with the view of almost all parents and carers that behaviour is good and that the school keeps their child safe. Pupils are aware of how to keep themselves safe and

move around school calmly. The few pupils who require support to manage their behaviour are guided with care, patience and understanding. Pupils enjoy coming to school and the majority attend regularly and punctually. A few pupils are frequently absent because of serious medical conditions. Additionally, some are taken on extended holidays abroad to visit family. The school does all it can to support these pupils during their absence and upon their return to school.

Leadership and management

The headteacher and the relatively new leadership team ably promote the school's clear vision to attain excellence. A systematic approach to tackling the issues for improvement identified by the last inspection has successfully resulted in improving rates of progress for pupils. Accurate and thorough self-evaluation has highlighted the correct priorities to move the school forward. Middle leaders are becoming increasingly experienced in their role and are taking an active part in improving provision and increasing the rate of pupils' progress. These successes demonstrate that the school has a good capacity for further improvement.

The revamped curriculum is a motivating factor in supporting pupils' good progress. Basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics are reinforced in a meaningful way. Experiences, such as designing and making a pizza, planning and making a park, or being a jungle explorer in the rainforest add to the appeal and excitement of learning, which pupils recall with enthusiasm and pride. Initiatives linked to the school's international award, alongside thoughtfully developed projects and a range of after-school clubs, provide pupils with a wide range of cultural, sporting and artistic opportunities. The school successfully ensures that all pupils have equal opportunities to succeed and it is proactive in ensuring that there is no discrimination. Safeguarding procedures meet requirements.

The governing body provides invaluable support to the school, fulfils its statutory duties and is increasingly acting as a 'critical friend'. Parents and carers are positive about the school and are kept well informed about aspects of school life and their children's progress, although a few stated that there could be more regular communication. The school is particularly successful in engaging the parents and carers of those pupils whose circumstances might make them more vulnerable, so that they can play a full part in their child's education.

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).

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.



2 February 2012

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Regent Farm First School, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE3 3PE

Thank you all for the warm welcome you gave to the inspectors when we visited you recently. We really enjoyed meeting you and finding out about your school. Here are the main things we found.

- You go to a good school.
- You make good progress because you work hard on interesting topics and receive good teaching.
- Your school is led and managed well. All staff and members of the governing body do all they can to help your learning.
- You feel safe and secure in school and, as you told us, you know who to go to if you need help.
- You all work and play together very well.

Even in good schools, there are ways of improving and helping you to make better progress. We have asked your teachers to:

- make sure you have more time to work by yourself to practise what you have been taught
- make sure that your work is at exactly the right level to help you make the best progress
- help you understand what you need to do next when they are marking your books.

You can help by continuing to work as hard as you can. Thank you for helping with this inspection.

Yours sincerely

Susan Waugh
Lead Inspector

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