

Acomb First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122170
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	380411
Inspection dates	7–8 February 2012
Lead inspector	Paul Hancock HMI

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	5–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	58
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gordon Scorer
Headteacher	Lee Madderson
Date of previous school inspection	16 January 2009
School address	Bishops Hill Main Street Acomb Hexham NE46 4PL
Telephone number	01434 603870
Fax number	Not applicable
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Introduction

Inspection team

Paul Hancock

Her Majesty's Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice by one inspector who observed three teachers teaching nine lessons. One was a joint observation with the headteacher. The inspector met with the headteacher, the Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body and discussed the work of the school with pupils. The inspector looked at a number of documents, including the school self-evaluation and improvement plan, the safeguarding and equality policies, and minutes of the governing body meetings. The inspector took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection and 56 parents' and carers' questionnaires were analysed along with others completed by pupils and staff.

Information about the school

At this smaller than average first school all pupils are White British and no pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than the national average. The number of pupils entering or leaving the school other than at the usual times is well below average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is average. The school shares the building and the Reception classroom with a private nursery which provides a breakfast club. Since the previous inspection, the number of pupils on roll has increased and the governing body and the private nursery have formed increasing links with a cross-population of personnel on both of the respective leadership and management bodies. The school has gained awards for Healthy Schools status and the Basic Skills Quality Mark.

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

- Acomb is a good school which has steadily improved since the previous inspection. For example, boys are now achieving as well as girls and the most-able are making more rapid progress. Good leadership, governance and teaching ensure that learning is matched well to pupils' capabilities in the mixed-age classes.
- Pupils make good and consistent progress and they are keen to succeed. Behaviour is good and they show very positive attitudes to their learning. They work productively with each other and relationships between pupils and with staff are strong. All parents and carers value the school highly.
- Standards of attainment by the time pupils leave the school are above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Good lesson planning and organisation ensures learning is purposeful and develops individual capabilities well. The school is rightly planning to make progress even more rapid by sharpening the match between tasks and individual learning. Also, by increasing the amount of time pupils are asked to learn independently on their own programmes of study.
- Teaching is good across the school and support staff are well deployed to make sure all pupils, including boys, the most-able and those with special educational needs, make good progress. Teachers use the school's detailed assessment information well when planning lessons and activities build successfully on what pupils already know and can do. Marking is detailed and provides pupils with clear information about how well they are doing.
- Robust action by senior leaders is making sure the school continues to improve. The school recognises the pace of improvement is steady and senior leaders know the requirements to continue the upward trend of improvement. The governing body holds the school to account well and supports the school effectively to drive improvement and make sure pupils achieve well.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make pupils' progress even more rapid by:
 - ensuring all pupils are fully stretched in every lesson
 - making sure work is always matched to individual needs and starting points
 - asking pupils to learn independently on their own programmes of study more frequently.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Achievement is good and improving. Pupils make good progress in lessons as they move through the school. This is reflected in consistent improvements in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, attainment particularly in reading is above average by the end of Year 4 when pupils leave the school. Pupils' positive attitudes and eagerness to learn help them to benefit from challenging and well planned tasks. They work productively with other pupils in shared activities and remain focused for long periods of time when working on their own. Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics in national tests at the end of Key Stage 1 has been above average every year since the previous inspection and improved again in 2011. Boys are now doing as well as girls and the progress of the most-able pupils has further improved. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good and they also make good progress. The school provides very effective support to help them improve and their needs are known in detail. Inspection evidence confirms parents' and carers' views that their children are achieving well.

Developing pupils' reading, writing and number skills from an early age is a high priority in the Reception class. Pupils make rapid progress learning new words and how to write accurately. The teaching uses a successful range of techniques such as role-play to build up pupils' knowledge and consolidate learning. As a consequence, the pupils thoroughly enjoy lessons, their interest is captured and they are fully involved asking searching questions to improve their thinking. In the two other mixed-age classes where progress is good, the school recognises and inspection evidence confirms there is the capacity to make progress even more rapid by making sure pupils are fully stretched all of the time learning independently on their own programmes of study. Pupils' competence and confidence in reading and writing is enhanced by the sharper focus on phonics (linking letters with the sounds that letters make), guided reading and extended writing.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is consistently good and expectations are high. Lesson planning is thorough and different work is set by age and ability. Activities which engage, motivate and promote successful learning are effectively matched to pupils' needs and the most recent assessment information is taken into account. Although teachers produce different work, there is room to align it more precisely to pupils' needs and provide more time for independent study. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and staff morale is high. The teaching makes a good impact on spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, for example the school has links with the Kenyan aid project and the Newcastle soup kitchen.

Assessment information is used successfully to ensure all pupils are making good progress. Books are marked thoroughly and pupils are given useful advice and opportunities to respond to teachers' comments. Progress is regularly reviewed in lessons by teachers and support staff so that teachers know how well pupils are doing. Adjustments are made to ensure that pupils remain on track and focused support helps those pupils who have special educational needs. As a result, they play a full part in lessons and achieve well. Teachers' good subject knowledge is used well to deliver a range of learning challenges and activities that pupils find stimulating. For example in the Year 1 and 2 class where they were learning new reading skills, the teacher's good knowledge of phonics (sounds and letters) ensured compound words were very effectively used to sound and write new sentences. Pupils are frequently expected to solve problems, plan and discuss work with their peers. Questioning and class discussions are a strong feature of the teaching and pupils are asked to think for themselves as a matter of routine.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour is good in lessons, around the school and over time. There are occasions when it is outstanding. This happens when pupils' interest is fully captured and they are learning at the quickest rate. Effective procedures result in above average attendance and there is no persistent absence. Pupils say they feel very safe and there is no bullying in any form. They know that any problems or difficulties will be dealt with very effectively and they show respect towards each other and the staff. All parents and carers support the work of the school very positively. They endorse the school's approach to maintaining good behaviour and feel that pupils are kept very safe.

Leadership and management

All leaders, managers and governors have high aspirations for the school. There is a strong focus on making further gains in attainment and achievement through improving the quality of teaching through professional development. The school's performance is effectively monitored and evaluated which ensures improvement planning is clearly targeted in the right areas. Consequently, achievement and attainment have improved, for example for boys and the most-able. A good, broad and well-balanced curriculum is delivering learning which pupils appreciate and enjoy. It successfully promotes literacy and numeracy skills and equality of opportunity for all pupils. The promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good, frequently through the curriculum and various enrichment activities. Safeguarding arrangements are secure and routinely reviewed. The governing body directly challenges the leadership and has a very clear sense of purpose in promoting improvement. There is exceptional support from parents and carers who are unstinting in their praise of the school's work. The school has improved since the previous inspection and it has good capacity to make further gains.

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.



9 February 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Acomb First School, Hexham, NE46 4PL

Thank you for all your help when I inspected the school. Please would you pass on my thanks to your parents and carers for returning the questionnaires and say we took all their views into account. I thought you might like to know what I found about your school.

- Acomb is a good and improving school.
- You achieve very well and standards are above average.
- The quality of teaching is good and continuing to improve.
- You feel safe and are well cared for, guided and supported.
- All leaders, managers and members of the governing body are making the right improvements to help you achieve even more highly.

To help them do this, I have asked if they would make pupils' progress even more rapid by:

- ensuring all pupils are fully challenged in every lesson
- making sure work is always matched to individual needs and starting points
- asking pupils to learn independently on their own programmes of study more frequently.

Yours sincerely

Paul Hancock
Her Majesty's Inspector

