

Whinfield Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134719
Local authority	Darlington
Inspection number	381718
Inspection dates	7–8 February 2012
Lead inspector	Linda Buller

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	592
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Karen Cunningham
Headteacher	Sheila Williams
Date of previous school inspection	5 November 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

Linda Buller

Kathleen Mullen

Lesley Richardson

Additional inspector

Additional inspector

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspection team observed 32 lessons taught by 20 different teachers, including one observed jointly with the headteacher. They also observed individual support sessions and listened to pupils read. They held discussions with pupils, members of staff, and members of the governing body. They observed the school's work and scrutinised examples of pupils' work, as well as documentation relating to pupils' achievement and school management. The inspectors also took into account the questionnaires completed by pupils, school staff and 172 parents and carers.

Information about the school

The school is larger than most primary schools. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average as is the proportion of pupils with special educational needs. There are no disabled pupils currently in the school. Most pupils are from a White British heritage. The school meets the current government floor standards on attainment and progress. The school has been accredited with Healthy School status and the Sustainable Travel bronze level 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

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 enjoy learning and achieve well. They rapidly gain in self-confidence and from Reception to Year 6 contribute strongly to their successful learning by above-average attendance.
- Pupils leave Year 6 with attainment that is above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils of higher ability often achieve exceptionally well. Others make good progress overall but their rate of progress is not consistent in all classes.
- Teaching is good overall, although a few inconsistencies remain. In the majority of lessons, particularly those related to developing pupils' literacy skills, teachers use their accurate knowledge of how well pupils are doing to ensure that tasks build well on what pupils already know. When teaching is less effective, links between prior learning and what pupils need to learn next in order to make good progress are not considered carefully enough. These remaining inconsistencies in the quality of teaching are the main barrier to pupil achievement becoming outstanding overall.
- The behaviour and safety of pupils is good. Pupils say that misbehaviour is uncommon and when it does occur it is effectively dealt with by their teachers.
- The positive impact of the curriculum on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is evident in the fascination and resilience they show when tackling new learning, their consideration of others and their enjoyment of new cultural experiences. The curriculum does not fully meet the needs of all pupils in mathematics, and at times there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to use their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects.
- Good quality leadership and management have built an effective staff team. In the main, monitoring is used well to provide teachers with pertinent guidance for improvement. However, leaders and managers do not always fully take into account the rate of pupil progress over time when observing lessons. As a result, opportunities are sometimes missed to identify precisely why progress is inconsistent in some classes.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further accelerate the rate and consistency of the progress of all pupils by:
 - giving full consideration to what pupils already know to plan learning which is precisely focused on what pupils of different abilities need to learn next
 - using observation of pupils' work in lessons to recognise when activities need to be adjusted to maintain good progress
 - sharing best practice in the marking of pupils' work as a means of bringing about improvement.

- Increase the effectiveness of leaders and managers in bringing about further improvement by:
 - Reviewing the curriculum provision for mathematics so that it fully meets the needs and interests of all pupils
 - reviewing how teaching groups are organised in Key Stage 2 so that there are more opportunities for pupils to develop literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects
 - giving full consideration to the impact of teaching on pupil progress over time when observing lessons.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils are enthusiastic about learning. This contributes significantly to their good achievement. Girls and boys participate fully in paired work and whole-class talk. They listen carefully to their teachers and try their best to complete tasks even when occasionally they struggle to fully understand the purpose of the activity and how this will move their learning forward. Pupils describe their lessons as fun and give many examples of how games and other activities have helped them to learn easily and consolidate their skills. For example, pupils in Year 2 enjoyed a game of word bingo. Pupils' bingo cards were varied and carefully matched to their individual ability to blend letters together to make words.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage regularly use their imaginations to extend their speaking and listening skills. They use their learning of traditional tales to add and extend the plot through acting out or creating new characters. A structured programme, skilfully delivered by teachers, effectively supports the development of early reading skills. As a result, levels of attainment are improving, particularly in communication, language and literacy skills which are now above average for many children. Pupils build on this knowledge well in Key Stage 1 where they use their knowledge of letters and the sounds they make to read with increasing fluency and to spell accurately. This good progress continues in Key Stage 2 with pupils able to express with confidence their preference of reading material and discuss with maturity the styles used by different authors and in turn begin to demonstrate this in their own writing. As a result, the reading skills of pupils at the end of both Year 2 and Year 6 are above average.

The majority of parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire expressed the opinion that their children make good progress. Inspection evidence generally supports this positive opinion. However, work in pupils' books, discussion with pupils and observation of lessons indicate that this is not yet consistently the case in all classes, particularly in writing

and mathematics. This slowing of progress is more common in Years 3 and 4. As a result, despite often rapid progress in Years 5 and 6, attainment is above average rather than high.

Pupils with special educational needs regularly attain levels above those of similar pupils nationally. In response to a good range of specifically targeted interventions these pupils make the rapid progress needed to close the gap between their attainment and that expected nationally by the time they leave the school in Year 6. The attainment of those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals regularly matches or exceeds that of their peers nationally.

Quality of teaching

Most parents and carers consider that their children are learning well and that the quality of teaching is good. Teaching is predominantly good throughout the school. Many pupils acquire knowledge quickly and are increasingly secure in their understanding due to the range of teaching and learning styles which provide frequent opportunities for them to collaborate in small groups and to share and extend each other's ideas and views. Teaching has a positive impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Teachers manage pupils very well through the development of good relationships and by acting as very good role models for pupils' moral and social development. As a result, incidents of learning slowing in order to deal with inappropriate behaviour are rare. Improvements in teaching and the curriculum provide good opportunities for creativity and enable pupils to develop curiosity about their learning, for example when carrying out investigations in mathematics and science.

Pupils thrive in lessons where they are challenged to achieve their best. In an outstanding lesson in Year 6, higher attaining pupils were making outstanding progress in their ability to use all of their prior knowledge to solve algebra problems. This was because the lesson moved at a fast pace and the teacher made it explicit to each pupil what she required of them. Pupils were fascinated by the pattern they could see and the relationship between numbers because their tasks were well-planned to enable them to investigate and make decisions for themselves. In contrast, in some other mathematics lessons, insufficient account is taken of what pupils already know and teachers do not always use their observation of pupils' learning well enough to recognise the weaknesses in their planning in order to modify learning during the lesson.

There are examples of highly effective marking which provide precise guidance for improvement, particularly in the literacy books of higher-attaining pupils. The improvement of pupils' work as a result of this guidance is clear. This is one of the reasons why the number of pupils who now attain levels higher than those expected for their age in English is improving well. This exemplary practice is not yet evident throughout the school. Marking is less effective when it is not made clear to pupils where they have gone wrong, or when, having made points for improvement, teachers move on to new learning without pupils having the opportunity to fill the gaps identified in their knowledge.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' good behaviour contributes well to a cohesive school. Attendance is consistently above average. In discussion pupils overwhelmingly say that they feel safe in school and that adults are always there for them. Parents and carers share their children's positive view of the school's ability to keep their children safe and consider behaviour typically to be good. Pupils are confident in adults' ability to respond promptly to any problems they have. Pupils say that

bullying by name-calling does occasionally occur but all agree that bullying of any kind is dealt with effectively by the school. Pupils of different ages maturely explained what steps they need to take to avoid risk inside and out of school. Lessons run without interruption because pupils understand the fairness of taking turns and they treat each other with courtesy and respect. From the youngest children in the Reception classes to the oldest, pupils develop good social skills by working together and sharing their thoughts and ideas. Throughout the school pupils understand what is expected of them and what rewards or sanctions will result from their actions. They not only develop an understanding of what is acceptable behaviour within school but through a range of activities they develop a good understanding of the conduct required of a good citizen, including an acceptance and celebration of a range of cultures. This prepares pupils well for the future.

Leadership and management

Leaders and managers have a clear, shared vision and a systematic approach to driving school improvement. Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements and are central to the work of the school. The governing body supports the school well. Through undertaking a programme of training and external support, members of the governing body are striving to ensure they are in a position to provide senior staff with the level of challenge needed to ensure continued improvement. In the main, monitoring by leaders and managers at all levels leads to accurate self-evaluation and clear priorities for further improvement. For example, a clear focus on the development of reading through the professional development of staff has led to accelerated progress in English and contributed strongly to the above average standards attained by the end of Year 6. However, the recorded observations of lessons focus more on teaching strategies used rather than the impact of these on pupils' learning. As a result, some opportunities are missed to improve the consistency in the rate of pupil progress as they move through the school.

Regular monitoring and analysis of the progress of individual pupils prompts effective action to support those who are struggling. All pupils have equal opportunities to be included in activities. Rigorous tracking of the progress of those who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who have special educational needs is ensuring that appropriate actions are taken to close the gap between their attainment and that of other pupils. The school tackles discrimination robustly. In view of its good progress since the last inspection the school has strong capacity for further improvement.

The curriculum has particular strengths in the development of literacy skills, enrichment activities to broaden pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural experiences and the opportunities provided for higher-attaining pupils to investigate, think for themselves and take responsibility for their own learning. The curriculum for the teaching of mathematics is not quite so strong. Although the curriculum is well balanced and all programmes of study are covered, leading to the good acquisition of basic skills, the curriculum is not always well enough adjusted to build systematically on the needs or interests of pupils. In addition, the organisation of pupils into classes according to their ability limits the opportunities for teachers to recognise where gaps in pupils' knowledge can be addressed in other subjects.

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 Whinfield Primary School, Darlington, DL1 3HT

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave when the inspection team visited your school recently. Particular thanks to those of you who gave up some of your time to talk about your lessons. Your views and those in the questionnaire helped the team to understand what it is like to be a pupil at your school. The purpose in visiting your school was to find out at first-hand how well you are doing in your work and what those who lead and manage your school could do to make it even better.

Whinfield is a good school. Your positive attitudes to your work and your above-average attendance all contribute to your good achievement. The teaching you receive is good and as a result you make good progress to reach above-average levels of attainment by the time you leave the school. However, the work in your books, our discussions with you and our observation of your lessons showed that in some classes your progress could be faster. I have therefore asked those who lead and manage your school to check carefully that all teachers:

- are clear about what they want you to learn and that this helps all of you to build on what you already know
- check your work during lessons so that you are all doing as well as you can
- give you clear guidance about where you may have gone wrong when marking your work and show you how you can improve.

I have also asked leaders and managers to check that what you are taught in mathematics and the way they organise your classes in Years 3–6 is the best way to help you learn. You all can help by continuing with your positive attitudes to learning.

I hope that you continue to enjoy learning and school life as much as you do now.

Yours sincerely

Linda Buller
Lead Inspector

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