

# High Spen Primary School

## Inspection report

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|                                |                     |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 108340              |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Gateshead           |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 377739              |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 22–23 February 2012 |
| <b>Lead inspector</b>          | Gill Gleghorn       |

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> | 168  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body                                   |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Lynne Caffrey  |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Andrew Firth   |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 30 September 2008                                    |
| <b>School address</b>                      | Hugar Road<br>High Spen<br>Rowlands Gill<br>NE39 2BQ |
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## Introduction

### Inspection team

Gill Gleghorn  
Clive Petts

Additional inspector  
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed 13 lessons taught by eight class teachers. They also observed a range of interventions activities for small groups of pupils, talked to pupils about their learning, and scrutinised in detail the work in pupils' books. Inspectors checked pupils' reading across the age range. In addition, inspectors held discussions with pupils, members of the governing body, and staff. The inspectors observed the school's work and examined a range of documentation, including the school's records relating to pupils' progress and achievement, evidence relating to leadership and management, monitoring and evaluation and safeguarding. They also took into account the questionnaires returned by 90 parents, 70 pupils, and 16 members of staff. No responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) were available to aid inspection planning.

## Information about the school

High Spen Primary School is a smaller than the average-sized primary school. Most pupils are of White British heritage, with very few at the early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is average, including those at school action plus and those with a statement of special educational needs. The recently opened Hearing Impairment Unit, HI ARMS, has one pupil attending. The school meets the current floor standard. The school has achieved the Eco Schools Bronze Award, Healthy Schools status, and the Basic Skills Quality Mark. A new headteacher and deputy headteacher were appointed in September 2011, along with the appointment of new teaching staff and significant changes in staff roles and responsibilities.

**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

- High Spen Primary School is a good school. Pupils enjoy their experiences in a safe and happy environment where they are cared for exceptionally well. Parents and carers endorse this judgement. The newly appointed senior team provides determined leadership focused on raising standards. The school is not outstanding because, although teaching is good, teachers' use of pupil information to provide activities that match the age and abilities of all varies. This leads to some unevenness in promoting English skills.
- Achievement of all groups of pupils is good. Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage from their individual starting points. They maintain this good progress and leave school with overall average attainment in English and above average in mathematics. An increasing proportion attains the higher levels in writing.
- In the outstanding lessons observed, teaching captured the pupils' enthusiasm and constantly challenged their thinking and understanding. A strength was the support pupils received to improve their work through individual targets and quality feedback. Best practice in teaching is not yet shared effectively to improve pace and challenge in all lessons.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. Their positive attitudes contribute well to their learning. They are clear about what is acceptable and show respect to each other in and around the school. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in various situations.
- Leadership and management are good. The new headteacher is building an effective team of senior leaders who share his vision to improve the school. Systems to assess and monitor pupils' progress have sharpened and identify quickly those pupils in need of additional support. Teaching is well led. Partnerships with the local community are outstanding. Accurate self-evaluation informs current actions to raise attainment.

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

- Raise attainment and accelerate progress, particularly in English, by:
  - ensuring that assessment information is used effectively to plan activities that match age and ability needs of all pupils
  - ensuring that pupils' blending of letters and sounds is practised relentlessly to enhance their reading and writing skills
  - building on existing good and outstanding practice in teaching to ensure a consistently high level of challenge and pace in lessons.

## Main Report

### Achievement of pupils

Pupils' good attitudes contribute effectively to their learning. The pupils settle well to their work, are keen to do their best, and take pride in their presentation. In the Year 5/6 class, pupils participated enthusiastically in reading and discussing the poem 'Dream Catcher'. This led to a mature and imaginative use of vocabulary, enabling pupils to make good progress in writing and produce their own high-quality poetry. The use of individual targets ensures pupils know how well they are doing and strive to do their best. Writing and reading skills are catching up quickly on mathematics. In some lessons, the information about pupils' prior learning is used less well and the pace of learning slows because pupils are not challenged sufficiently.

Achievement is good. It is rising for all pupils because of a rigorous focus on monitoring and on improving the quality of teaching and learning. Robust tracking identifies where pupils need more help and support. Focused, targeted support from teachers and well-trained teaching assistants has ensured that disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are making good progress and the gap between their attainment and that of other pupils is closing rapidly. All parents and carers agree that their children make good progress in school.

Children settle confidently and happily in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are cared exceptionally well for and thrive in the positive environment. At this early age, the school instils a clear sense of values, self-belief, and a desire to learn successfully. A variety of enjoyable activities, such as making pancakes, challenge children's thinking and foster active learning, which enables the children to make good progress overall. Highly effective approaches develop early writing skills.

Attainment in reading at the end of 2011 was below average by the end of Key Stage 1. By the time pupils leave Key Stage 2, their attainment in reading is above average and pupils read with emotion and display confidence in discussing book choices.

### Quality of teaching

Teaching is good. Parents and carers, overwhelmingly, agree. Pupils recognise the teachers' high expectations and respond well to them. Staff use praise effectively,

boosting pupils' self-esteem. There is a strong focus on developing pupils' communication skills, particularly reading and writing, and acquiring new vocabulary. As they move through school, pupils develop the confidence to express their opinions and to perform in front of others. In an assembly, Key Stage 2 pupils presented their reasons for setting up a healthy tuck shop and gratefully accepted funding from a local supermarket to support their work. They conveyed the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle and of respecting the wishes of others. This exemplifies their good spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development.

Teachers make lessons enjoyable. In a Year 2 class when pupils were comparing the appearance and personalities of different 'granny' characters, taken from the class storybook, they were motivated due to the context for learning, good resources, and level of challenge provided. As a result, pupils were able to think creatively and express their opinions. Opportunities to write at length are planned and modelled well in some classes, but, in others, teachers' explanations are lengthy and pupils do not have enough time to practise their skills and the pace of learning slows.

Where teaching is good or better, teachers use assessment information skilfully 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. Rigorous follow-up by teachers through the good marking and continuous feedback provides pupils with points for improvement and ensures progress. As a result of targets being shared with parents and carers, they overwhelmingly agree that the school helps them to support their children's learning. Independent learning is encouraged and this was seen with a group of pupils in Early Years Foundation Stage who were encouraged to develop their questioning skills to find out about the weather. They produced questions confidently, such as 'How does thunder bang?' and 'Why does the sun hurt your eyes?'

Liaison between teachers and teaching assistants is good. This leads to effective support and care of pupils whose circumstances have made them potentially vulnerable and impacts positively on the good progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.

The planned curriculum has been developed effectively to take account of pupils' interests and needs. It enables teachers to be more creative and imaginative, linking subjects into meaningful learning experiences. It has an increasingly sharp focus on basic skills, but pupils are not always provided with enough opportunities to practise the blending of letters and sounds to enhance their reading and writing.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Behaviour observed in lessons and around the school is typically good. Pupils report that they feel safe and enjoy school. The vast majority of parents and carers agree. Discussions with pupils indicated that the school addresses any instances of poor behaviour immediately. They comment on how behaviour has improved over time. Pupils have a good understanding of what constitutes racist bullying and this underpins their positive attitudes about the different cultures in their school.

community and the world around them. Pupils are very willing to take on responsibilities, such as members of the school council, House Captains and Eco Warriors, acting as good role models for younger pupils. They are polite and considerate towards each other. Pupils are aware of how the curriculum helps them to understand unsafe situations through for example, visitors such as the police and fire service and courses such as cycling proficiency and e-safety.

The school promotes attendance and punctuality well. Attendance is high and pupils are punctual in arriving to their lessons.

## **Leadership and management**

The school is led and managed well. The new leadership team, led by the headteacher, has a clear vision to drive school improvement. Systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school are effective in raising pupils' achievement. Middle leaders and staff share the headteacher's ambitions and all have a role in implementing improvement. As a result, staff morale is high and accountability for improvement is spread across the entire staff. Well-targeted professional development provided by experienced staff and external agencies adds to the improvement drive. However, arrangements for spreading across the whole school the existing good and outstanding practice that achieves high pace and challenge in lessons are not formally in place.

The governing body is extremely supportive and has a firm grasp on the school's strengths and areas for improvement. It is vigilant in ensuring good safeguarding practices are adopted. One member of the governing body organises the 'Press Pack', with a group of older pupils, which contributes to improving the pupils' writing skills by producing a regular and very professional school newsletter. Pupils have a strong sense of belonging because equality of opportunity is promoted successfully and any discrimination tackled successfully. The high quality of care and support ensures that staff identify pupils' and family needs quickly. This makes sure that all pupils are given every opportunity to be successful. The coordinator for special educational needs is new to the role, but demonstrates approaches to securing further improvement and enhancing provision. Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. The drive and ambition is reflected in the good outcomes, good provision and exceptional care. The school has good capacity to sustain improvement.

The curriculum is broad and varied and has been adapted effectively to meet the needs of the pupils across the school and has a positive impact on pupils' achievement. It provides pupils with a wide range of interesting and varied experiences, which meet the interests of the pupils and gives teachers the opportunities to link subjects in a fun way. This provision helps to ensure pupils' good spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development. For example, Year 2 pupils held a 'wedding' at a local church helping them to understand the importance of relationships. Partnerships with the local community are outstanding. This is reflected in the work of the school with the local council and the Heritage Fund to raise funds to honour the two Victoria Cross holders from the village. As a result, a local artist produced a sculpture, which stands proudly in the school grounds.

## 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.**



24 February 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of High Spen Primary School, Rowlands Gill, NE39 2BQ**

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and appreciated the information you gave us.

You go to a good school that provides excellent care and supports you in your learning. We were very impressed with how much you knew about keeping safe and healthy. You take on responsibilities willingly, such as members of the school council, House Captains and Eco Warriors, and work hard to make your school the happy and safe place it is. We were particularly impressed by the way you value your community and the way you honour the High Spen Heroes. We were pleased by your good behaviour and the way you looked after each other. You, clearly, feel safe and happy.

You enjoy your lessons and say that your teachers make learning fun. Teaching is good and this helps you to make good progress. We have asked your headteacher to help you to reach higher standards by making sure you are challenged and have time to complete your work, particularly in writing, so you can continue to improve. We have also asked that you have time to practise your letters and sounds to help you improve your reading and writing. We would like teachers to share their best practice to make certain that all your activities meet your needs and interests. You can help by continuing to work hard on your targets in all your lessons.

We wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Gill Gleghorn  
Lead Inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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