

# North and South Cowton Community Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	121309
<b>Local authority</b>	North Yorkshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	380205
<b>Inspection dates</b>	29 February 2012–1 March 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Derek Neil

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>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	33
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Derek Smith
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jonathan Briggs
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 December 2006
<b>School address</b>	North Cowton Northallerton DL7 0HF
<b>Telephone number</b>	01325 378240
<b>Fax number</b>	-
<b>Email address</b>	headteacher@northsouthcowton.n-yorks.sch.uk

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## Introduction

### Inspection team

Derek Neil

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed three staff in seven lessons or parts of lessons. These included a joint observation with the headteacher. The inspector held meetings with groups of pupils, with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, and with school staff. He had informal discussions with some parents. He took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents including the school development plan and assessment information. He analysed 18 parental questionnaires.

## Information about the school

All of the pupils in this very small split-site primary school are White British. The proportions who are known to be eligible for free school meals and who have special educational needs are below average. The school provides breakfast and after-school clubs and it has Healthy School Status. It meets the current floor standard. A new headteacher took up post in September 2011.

**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. Its strengths include the strong relationships with parents and carers; the friendly, family atmosphere; and the well-planned curriculum, which offers pupils a rich variety of interesting activities to further their personal and academic development. All of these contribute to pupils' maturing, as one parent put it, 'into pleasant and sociable young people'. The school is not outstanding because of some shortcomings in the teaching and in the way assessment is used to improve pupils' work.
- Attainment is above average. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning, enjoy being in school and achieve well, although sometimes their otherwise very good written work contains some easily avoidable spelling mistakes.
- Teaching is effective. Lessons are characterised by the good relationships between everyone in the class and the individual support pupils receive to help them with their work. Occasionally, some activities do not provide enough challenge for the most-able pupils. Recent changes to the way staff assess pupils' progress have contributed to rising attainment, but pupils do not fully understand how to make the most of the information they get about improving their work.
- Pupils behave well and are safe in school. They are courteous and confident when speaking to adults and show respect and great friendship for each other. They report that there is no bullying.
- Leadership and management are good. The school has made steady progress since the previous inspection and considerable strides since the appointment of the new headteacher. Rigorous evaluation of lessons, underpinned by a range professional development, has resulted in clear improvements to the quality of teaching.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching by:
  - ensuring the most-able pupils are challenged by their work at all times

- managing the noise in classrooms so that it does not distract anyone from their work.
- Use assessment better to raise attainment by:
  - simplifying the language used to explain the assessment process to pupils
  - developing a systematic and rigorous approach to correcting commonly misspelt words.

## Main Report

### Achievement of pupils

Attainment is above average. After a recent dip in test results, action taken by the new headteacher has arrested a slight decline in the standard of writing. By the end of Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils' reading skills are well above average. Younger pupils make good use of their knowledge of the sounds letters make (phonics) when they are confronted by an unfamiliar word. Older pupils read with confidence and enthusiasm, although sometimes a little too much haste causes them to read inaccurately. Pupils' writing is neat and usually well presented. It shows imagination and a keenness to use adventurous vocabulary. Punctuation and sentence structure are strong, partly as a result of the school's recent emphasis on raising attainment in writing. Occasionally, some otherwise good work is spoiled by errors in commonly misspelt words, often not picked up by the teacher. For example, pupils confuse 'their' and 'they're', and make mistakes with traditional pitfalls like 'believe' and 'February'.

Achievement is good. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress because of the excellent relationships in the very small unit and the high level of individual support they receive. By the end of Reception they are all working securely within the early learning goals, although they rarely exceed them. Pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stages 1 and 2. In lessons they have very good attitudes to learning. They listen attentively and eagerly volunteer answers to the teacher's questions. They carry out pair and group work very responsibly, often without any adult intervening. For example, Key Stage 2 pupils enthusiastically set about solving some arithmetical problems in order to crack a code they had been given. A group of Year 1 pupils organised themselves efficiently to play a card game in which they had to identify real and made-up words. Pupils with special educational needs make equally good progress, because their needs are quickly identified and, as they are few in number, staff give them a lot of individual attention in the specific areas where they need more help. In a one-to-one phonics session with a teaching assistant, for example, a boy made important gains in his ability to read words involving the 'ar' sound. Pupils confirm they learn well in school most of the time and their parents and carers rightly agree that they make good progress.

### Quality of teaching

Most of the teaching is good, and parents, carers and pupils confirm this is the case. Teachers explain the work clearly and model very effectively how the lesson's various tasks are to be tackled. The activities they plan often capture pupils' interest and motivate them to work hard and make good progress. For example, pupils enjoyed imagining the conversations of the survivors from the Titanic, before going on to write a dialogue. Younger

pupils in a phonics session delighted in remembering mimes to accompany different letters. Teachers plan lessons in detail, recognising the need to match work to a very wide range of age groups and abilities. Teaching assistants and other adults are well briefed on their role and provide effective support for small groups. The organisation of such diverse groups and activities is managed efficiently, though older pupils are sometimes distracted by the noise of classmates' discussions in other parts of the room. The well-planned curriculum and thorough assessment arrangements help teachers to match work closely to pupils' needs. However, on occasion the most able are not challenged by some of the whole-class teaching or when an unsupervised activity does not lead to enough new learning.

Teachers make the most of opportunities to contribute to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, in one lesson the teacher was quick to remind pupils that it was inappropriate to laugh at a classmate's incorrect answer to her question. Staff use praise very effectively to build up pupils' self-confidence and love of learning, including at the end of the day when pupils gather to reflect on what they have achieved. Teachers provide many opportunities for pupils to develop independence by working unsupervised in groups or on their own. Recent improvements to the way pupils' work is assessed and in the way staff use the information have led to pupils making clear gains in their knowledge and skills. However, it is an elaborate system and pupils admit to being a little confused by some of its terminology. They are not all clear on how well they are doing or what they need to do to improve.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Behaviour is good, as parents and carers confirm. No pupils have been excluded for many years and racist incidents are unknown. Pupils behave well in class. They work hard and their conduct very rarely disrupts the learning. Outside lessons, behaviour is just as good. Pupils are very sociable and interact with others of all age groups. The great majority feel safe in school, and all parents and carers concur. Pupils are proud that bullying does not take place here. Name-calling is very rare and when it occurs it is of a minor nature. Staff supervise pupils very closely during breaks and when they move between the two sites. Attendance is high and no pupil is persistently absent from school. Although some time is lost when pupils return to the Key Stage 2 site for lessons after assembly, this is not due in any way to their behaviour. At the start of the day and after playtime they are very punctual.

### **Leadership and management**

The school has improved since the previous inspection. Although attainment in writing dipped recently, the headteacher has taken swift and effective action to tackle this issue. The headteacher monitors and evaluates the school's performance, using an extensive range of data and direct observation of the school at work. He has accurately identified the areas that need to improve and planned suitable actions to deal with these issues. His observations of lessons generate insightful comments about teaching and, together with a good range of professional development, have led to improvements in its quality. Much of the responsibility for leading the school falls upon the headteacher but governors have developed a good understanding of their role in holding the school to account and are helping to share the responsibilities of leadership. They recognise the need to consider carefully how some responsibilities might be shared by other staff. Given its good track record and leaders' accurate knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses, the school has good capacity to improve.

Well-conceived changes to the curriculum have ensured that it continues to meet pupils' needs and accelerates the progress they make. Three developments in particular stand out. First, an imaginative homework programme, linked to work in class and designed to involve parents and carers, has inspired pupils in Key Stage 2 to produce some creative work of very high quality. For example, one girl wrote a detailed record of her research into a piece of music. Second, a systematic approach to the revision of basic mathematical skills, carefully targeted on small groups of pupils, has ensured that all pupils have a chance to consolidate or understand better any work that has eluded them in the past. Third, carefully designed links between literacy and numeracy and topic work give pupils opportunities to develop their basic skills in different contexts. For example, when learning about pirates, pupils wrote a diary, using their knowledge of first-person narratives. The curriculum makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The breakfast and after-school clubs bring pupils of all ages together to play. One boy in Key Stage 1, for instance, settled very quickly into the football club, despite being the youngest there. The school does not tolerate discrimination in any form. All pupils work and play harmoniously together and no one feels left out. The drive to raise standards ensures that pupils of all ages and abilities achieve equally well. The school's arrangements for keeping pupils safe meet requirements.

## 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.**



2 March 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of North and South Cowton Community Primary School,  
Northallerton, DL7 0HF**

Thank you for welcoming me so warmly into your school when I visited recently. I enjoyed watching you in lessons and at play, talking about your school with you and your teachers, and looking at your work. Now I want to share with you what I found.

You go to a good school. It has many strong points. Staff take good care of you; I understand why you say you feel safe there. You behave well and look after each other. The teachers often give you interesting activities in lessons. This helps you to make good progress in literacy and numeracy and also in your personal development. I was very impressed by the way you all played together, the big ones with the little ones, and by the confident and polite way many of you came and talked to me. You enjoy reading and many of you read well. I saw some of your homework folders, and clearly you enjoy doing creative work at home as well as at school.

There are a few things that would make the school better. I have asked the staff to make sure that you always have work at the right level and that the noise levels in the classroom enable you to make as much progress as possible. I have also asked them to explain clearly to you how your work is assessed so you know how to improve it. Some of you make too many spelling errors, and I have asked staff to help you here. You can assist by being careful not to make spelling mistakes in the first place, and by learning from any errors the teacher points out to you.

Thank you again for helping me so much. It was a pleasure to meet you. I wish all of you the very best.

Yours sincerely

Derek Neil  
Lead inspector

