

Appletree Gardens First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108584
Local authority	North Tyneside
Inspection number	377778
Inspection dates	29 February 2012–1 March 2012
Lead inspector	Janette Corlett

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	303
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tim Noble
Headteacher	Jillian Burrell
Date of previous school inspection	20 October 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

Janette Corlett
Belita Scott
Geoffrey Seagrove

Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 11 teachers teaching 16 lessons or parts of lessons, of which one was a joint observation with the headteacher. In addition, the inspection team made short visits to a number of 'support sessions' where extra help is provided by trained assistants. Inspectors talked to groups of pupils in lessons, during breaks and the lunch hour and listened to a sample of pupils reading independently. Meetings were held with two members of the governing body, two advisers from the local authority and school staff including the headteacher, senior and middle leaders. Inspectors looked at the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) but there were too few responses to aid inspection planning. They observed the school's work, and looked at a number of documents, including the school development plan, safeguarding documents together with child protection and anti-bullying policies. Also, inspectors analysed 64 parental and carers' questionnaires and others completed by pupils and staff.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is slightly above average. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. A lower than average proportion of pupils is from minority ethnic groups and speaks English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is above average but the percentage with a statement of special educational needs is below average.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key Findings

- This is a satisfactory school. Although children make outstanding progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils' progress in Years 1 to Year 4 is no better than satisfactory. This means that despite recent improvements, the quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory rather than good.
- Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Their attainment at the end of Year 4 is rising and the number of pupils reaching standards above those expected at the end of Year 4 is increasing. Pupils are keen readers and reach above expected attainment in reading by the end of Year 4.
- Teaching is outstanding in the Early Years Foundation Stage, but this excellent practice is not used to full advantage to inspire a similar quality of teaching elsewhere in the school. In other year groups, the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. In good lessons in Key Stages 1 and 2, teachers engage pupils and extend their thinking, but on occasions pupils become inattentive when they are asked to sit and listen for too long. In addition, work is not always adapted well enough to the different needs of all pupils, especially for those pupils with special educational needs and for those who are more able.
- Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory. Most say that they enjoy coming to school and feel safe, which is reflected in their above average attendance. Pupils generally behave well in lessons, but occasionally the behaviour of some is less good when they move around the school and they are not quite so closely supervised by adults.
- Through their overall satisfactory leadership of teaching and learning and sound performance management, leaders have brought about improvements in pupils' overall attainment, including in reading and in pupils' attendance. There have been some improvements in teaching but its overall quality remains satisfactory. Some policies, such as for behaviour, are not yet fully robust.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching in Years 1 to 4 to consistently good or better so that all pupils make good or better progress by:
 - ensuring that teachers routinely use assessment data to plan tasks and activities that are well-matched to the age and ability of individuals and groups of pupils, especially for those who have special educational needs and those that are more able
 - ensuring that the pace of lessons is such that pupils are fully engaged and active in their learning
 - ensuring that pupils all understand how to achieve their individual targets and are given enough time to correct or improve their work.
- Improve the effectiveness of school leaders in securing improvement by:
 - ensuring that the outstanding practice in the Early Years Foundation Stage is used to best advantage to inspire others
 - fully embedding systems for monitoring the quality of teaching so that teachers are given appropriate support for improvement.
- Improve pupils' behaviour during playtimes by ensuring that the school's expectations of behaviour are consistently high and that the new focus on the school's behaviour policy is maintained by all staff.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and their attainment in English and mathematics is above nationally expected levels by the end of Year 4. Children's progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, which is a strength of the school, is outstanding. Children work exceptionally well together, sharing and helping each other.

Pupils' progress through the rest of the school is satisfactory overall, although data and work in pupils' books indicate that it is improving. Pupils generally work well and most of them enjoy their lessons. Progress is at its best when the pace of learning is swift and pupils are actively involved in 'hands on' tasks. It slows where pupils spend too long passively listening to teachers talking or where the tasks set are not well matched to their individual needs and level of maturity. Pupils who have special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall. These pupils make good progress when working individually or in small groups with an adult to support their learning, but their progress is sometimes less rapid in whole-class sessions, where they are not always quite sure what to do. Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who speak English as an additional language make satisfactory progress and the gap between their attainment and that of other pupils has narrowed by the end of Year 4. The school has successfully focussed on improving pupils' progress in writing with a variety of initiatives to stimulate pupils' enthusiasm, particularly that of boys. For example, a recent visit from a 'pirate' proved highly effective in helping pupils to develop their vocabulary and descriptive writing.

Attainment in reading at the end of Year 2 is average. Most pupils use their knowledge of the links between letters and sounds to break down words and pronounce them. By Year 4, pupils' attainment in reading is above expected levels for pupils of this age. Adult volunteers support the school by listening to pupils read, helping them to develop confidence even when coming across unfamiliar and complex words and names of characters. The school is effectively encouraging the habit of reading. Right across the school pupils said they liked to read and confirmed that many of them read at home. Questionnaire responses showed that parents and carers thought the school supported their children well in their learning. The inspection judgement is that pupils' development of skills is satisfactory.

Quality of teaching

Although good teaching is evident, overall its quality is satisfactory. In the Early Years Foundation Stage highly skilled teachers and support assistants build on the children's own experiences in a stimulating indoor and outdoor learning environment. They maintain a careful balance between those activities, which children choose by themselves, and those which are directed by adults so that not a moment of learning time is wasted. As a result, children swiftly become confident and independent learners.

In Key Stages 1 and 2 teachers generally have good subject knowledge and make effective use of skilful questioning to engage pupils and extend their thinking. They make good use of interactive whiteboards to enhance learning and to make links between subject areas in the curriculum. In the best lessons, learning proceeds at a swift pace and pupils are encouraged to work quickly on interesting and engaging tasks. Skilled teaching assistants support small groups of learners who may need a little extra help with their work. Lessons provide pupils with opportunities to learn of other cultures and faiths and to think about the needs of others. Where teaching is less successful, planning is not based firmly on secure assessment of prior learning. As a result, gaps in understanding are not always identified. Some pupils then move on to tasks and activities that are too difficult for them to manage independently. This occasionally leads to confusion and inhibits progress, particularly in relation to developing basic skills in writing and mathematics. Equally, in some lessons there is not enough challenge for more-able pupils to move them forward rapidly in their learning, or pupils are required to sit passively for too long and, therefore, tend to lose concentration.

Teachers set detailed individual targets for improvement in writing and mathematics. However, pupils do not always understand them or know how and when they will have successfully achieved them. Marking has improved recently and pupils increasingly have more guidance on how to improve their work, particularly in writing. However, the quality of marking is inconsistent between classes and year groups and pupils have too few opportunities to act on teachers' comments and to correct or improve their work. Teachers and support staff promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by encouraging them to treat each other and adults in the school with respect, to listen to and value one another's viewpoint and to be aware of the potential impact of a thoughtless or unkind word or gesture.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The atmosphere in school is warm and welcoming. As a result, attendance is above average and the number of pupils who are persistently absent or late for school is declining. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage play and learn very happily together.

Typically pupils' behaviour is satisfactory. Whilst the majority behave sensibly in lessons and at play, some do not always control their behaviour as well when they move around the school at breaks and lunchtimes. School leaders are focussing the attention of all staff on the need to have the same expectations of behaviour outside lessons as in.

The overwhelming majority of pupils, parents and carers agree that children feel safe in school. A very few of them say that there are occasional incidents of bullying which have led to pupils feeling unhappy in school. Inspectors investigated this thoroughly and found that school leaders do not tolerate any form of bullying and treat any occurrences very seriously. Moreover, pupils say that they have every confidence in telling an adult if they are worried or upset, that they are always listened to and that appropriate action will be taken to stop the bullying immediately. There are no reported incidents of racism and the school celebrates diversity and fosters tolerance and understanding. Pupils are aware of the different types of bullying, including the dangers of cyber-bullying.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are satisfactory. All leaders have a determined approach to school improvement. For instance, effective strategies have been introduced to motivate pupils, especially boys, to write at length, and the whole-school focus on improving behaviour at playtimes is beginning to have a positive impact. Staff support for the school is strong and management responsibilities are shared. School leaders monitor teaching and check pupils' work. These actions are beginning to impact on improving the quality of teaching but are not yet sufficiently robust and rigorous to secure consistently good teaching throughout the school. Similarly, sharing outstanding practice is not used to full advantage. Professional development has been effective in some areas of teaching, such as the development of assessment and marking procedures.

The school works well with parents and carers and nearly all consider that the school meets their children's needs. The school promotes equality of opportunity well in some respects, but has not yet made sure that all pupils benefit from planning that matches their particular needs. The school tackles discrimination effectively. This is seen in the way that it welcomes pupils who speak English as an additional language, a few of whom are in the earliest stages of learning to speak English, and enables them to make progress in their academic and personal development. The governing body understands the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are supportive and yet suitably challenging of school leaders. Safeguarding arrangements meet current requirements. Staff have a sound understanding of safeguarding practice.

The curriculum is satisfactory and since the last inspection it has become more creative in its approach and, as a result, is popular with pupils. A recent project on the Romans, for example, was supported by a visiting theatre group and proved effective in motivating boys to write. In particular, pupils enjoy visits and the wide range of after-school activities. Visitors to the school also support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, raising pupils' aspirations and their awareness of their place in the diversity of local, national and global societies. The school has taken effective action to improve weaknesses identified at the time of the previous inspection. There is improvement in the achievement of pupils by the end of Year 4. This improvement over time, combined with increasingly effective self-evaluation procedures leading to identification of appropriate priorities for improvement, demonstrates the school's satisfactory capacity to bring about further improvements.

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 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Appletree Gardens First School, Whitley Bay, NE25 8XS

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave me when I inspected your school along with my colleagues. We enjoyed our time in your school and were very pleased to hear that most of you really enjoy school where you feel safe and know that your teachers care for you a great deal. I would like to say a special thank you to the children who talked with us in lessons, breaks and lunchtimes about your work and play.

We judged that your school is satisfactory and improving. The headteacher, all the staff and governors are helping you to improve the progress you make so that the standards you reach at the end of Year 4 are improving and are better than those expected of children of similar age. I have asked your teachers to help you to make even faster progress by making sure that the activities and tasks you are given in lessons are at just the right level to help you to learn even more, not too hard, but not too easy either. Additionally, I have asked them to make sure that you all know exactly what is expected in terms of the way you behave in and around the school. Most of you behave well, but a few of you do not always act sensibly when you move around the school or in the yard. That is such a shame, because you are all very special. I have asked school leaders to check up on how well you are doing in lessons and in your work more often.

You can help too by continuing to try really hard, listening to teachers' instructions and remembering to look after each other so that all of your school family continue to feel safe and to enjoy coming to school.

Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Janette Corlett
Lead Inspector

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