

# Escomb Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114103
<b>Local authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	378795
<b>Inspection dates</b>	12–13 March 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Clive Petts

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>	192
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Majorie Kellett
<b>Headteacher</b>	Wendy Gill
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	5 July 2007
<b>School address</b>	Three Lane Ends Escomb Bishop Auckland DL14 7SR
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## Introduction

### Inspection team

Clive Petts  
Anthony Kingston

Additional inspector  
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed 17 lessons taught by seven class teachers. They also observed a range of intervention activities for small groups of pupils, talked to different groups of 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, staff and the designated senior school improvement adviser. 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, behavioural records and safeguarding. They also took into account the questionnaires, returned by 114 parents and carers, 103 pupils and 24 staff. The inspectors looked at the online questionnaire (Parent View) but there were insufficient responses to aid inspection planning.

## Information about the school

Escomb is a smaller than average sized primary school. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage with none at the early stage of learning English. A well below average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is twice the national average, with an above average number with a statement of special educational needs. The school meets the current floor standard. The school extends its services in that it provides a breakfast club each morning. The school has achieved UNICEF Rights Respecting and Investor in Children awards. The headteacher was appointed in September 2010.

**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

- Escomb is a good school. It has made considerable progress in the past eighteen months, because the headteacher is driving improvements in the quality of learning quickly. All parents and carers appreciate the high quality of care and support. Excellent partnership working adds to the range of opportunities for pupils to develop. The school is not yet outstanding because although teaching is good, challenge and pace in lessons is occasionally uneven, especially for the more able.
- Children make good progress in the Reception class. In Key Stage 1, pupils make satisfactory but quickly accelerating progress, and progress is good in Key Stage 2. Rapid progress in improving writing skills has closed the gap with reading and mathematics. The current Year 6 pupils are predicted to reach above average attainment in English and mathematics, with an increased proportion expected to attain higher levels in mathematics.
- A large majority of teaching is good and occasionally it is outstanding. Opportunities are sometime missed to make the most of stimulating curricular experiences and fully engage pupils. Senior leaders recognise that the inspiring teaching in some classes provides a model to improve the less challenging and less briskly paced learning in others.
- Pupils thrive in the happy, friendly atmosphere and this promotes their good and sometimes exemplary behaviour. Pupils show a respect for and courtesy towards others. They can identify risk and danger and are able to keep themselves safe. The pupils' rapidly improving attendance reflects their enjoyment of school.
- The headteacher has sharpened the skills of senior and middle leadership and fostering effective team working. All share her vision and high ambition. Teaching is well led. Systems to monitor and evaluate school performance are rigorous and ensure self-evaluation is accurate. The family ethos promotes spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well.

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

- Increase the proportion of teaching which is outstanding by:
  - building upon the existing imaginative and inspiring practice in the school to increase the challenge and pace in lessons, especially for the more able
  - making the most of the rich curricular experiences to systematically improve pupils' skills
  - ensuring that probing questioning is continuously used to add to the pupils' knowledge and understanding
  - making certain that pupils remain engaged in their learning throughout lessons.

## Main Report

### Achievement of pupils

The school has systematically improved the quality of learning, particularly in Years 1 and 2, through robust checking of pupils' development and the painstaking nurturing of staff skills. Concerted action has been taken to tackle less effective teaching and ensure all activities are closely shaped to match the abilities and needs of pupils. Pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable and those who require additional help and support are quickly identified. Positive action has improved writing skills to ensure no significant difference with reading. This improvement is firmly reinforced by effective teaching of letter and sound relationships, especially in reception, to encourage accurate and confident early reading and writing. The rich curriculum captures pupils' interests, increasing their enjoyment and boosting progress rates. For example, a group of Year 6 pupils were observed totally absorbed arguing for and against child evacuation during the Second World War. All parents and carers agree that their children make good progress.

Children's skills on arrival into the Reception class are a little below those expected for their age. They settle quickly and happily in the vibrant environment, because inventive methods encourage children to work things out for themselves and pursue their own curiosity. The high expectations for working routines promote self-control exceptionally well. As pupils throughout the school develop their skills and interests, frequent opportunities are provided for them to practise their skills. Subjects are linked together in inventive ways to add to the richness of their learning, such as when younger pupils adopt the role of a scientist in their laboratory. Although this creates much enjoyment for pupils, not all learning opportunities are exploited relentlessly to lift achievement even more, such as when questioning pupils during the use of role play.

Over time, attainment by the end of Year 6 is above average in English and mathematics. Overall, this represents good achievement. However, in 2011 national tests a smaller proportion of more-able pupils achieved the highest level in mathematics than in English. Current Year 6 pupils are achieving well with gaps closing in the performance of more-able pupils, because the challenge and pace of learning in mathematics is more even. Attainment in reading at the end of Year 2 is broadly average. Intensive approaches to the teaching of reading enables pupils to quickly make sense of new words and use reading to discover, imagine and question. This is adding to their enjoyment. In Year 6, rapid inroads are being made fostering a fascination of reading. For example, pupils were observed eagerly reading about the plight of evacuees after participating in a drama workshop featuring Albie Reed, a

young evacuee. As a result, by the end of Year 6 attainment in reading is above average. Pupils with special educational needs and those disabled also make good progress, because their support is well targeted. Increasingly, parents and carers are involved helping their children to develop their skills and experiences, such as regularly listening to their children read.

## **Quality of teaching**

Teaching is good and occasionally outstanding. Almost all parents and carers agree. Highly effective strategies are in place to eliminate inconsistencies and promote continuous improvement in the quality of pupils' learning experience. Consequently, most teaching is good because teachers set high expectations and pupils respond well to them. There is a strong focus developing pupils' communication skills, especially their reading and extended writing. As a result of thoughtfully planned professional development, the teaching of writing, especially to younger pupils has improved rapidly. In lessons when progress is quickest, good use is made of lively approaches to engage pupils and questioning is thought-provoking. For example, glove puppets were employed in one lesson to illustrate the positive impact of animation on the quality of an oral presentation. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to think creatively, justify their views and write at length. Despite the use of interesting approaches, not all activities are accurately matched to pupils' abilities and talents to ensure challenge is relentless. When teaching is occasionally satisfactory, the pace of learning is uneven at times, because too much time is spent on the same task, questioning insufficiently probing and teacher's explanations too lengthy. This can lead to pupils becoming restless as their concentration slips.

In the outstanding lessons observed, imaginative approaches constantly encourage pupils to consider all options and explain their reasoning. Using the curriculum resourcefully, opportunities are skilfully planned for pupils to practise their literacy and numeracy skills in meaningful ways. Questioning anticipates the next stages in pupils' thinking. Thoughtful preparation ensures that disabled pupils and those with special educational needs achieve as well as their classmates.

Pupils know their targets and are keen to achieve them. Frequent positive and helpful marking provides pupils with good feedback, although not all written guidance for older, more-able pupils provides sufficient challenging, well-defined steps for improvement. In the Reception class, children's development is well recorded and assessments accurate. Teaching consistently promotes high levels of enjoyment, and pupils' ability to work individually, with partners or in a team; these are strong features of their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

The good and often exemplary behaviour of pupils creates a positive climate for learning in the safe and secure school environment. All parents and carers feel that their children are kept safe. Conversations with pupils reveal that the school addresses any instances of inappropriate behaviour promptly. They comment on how well pupils respect differences and are considerate. A very few parents and carers did express concern about minor disruption in lessons, but almost all referred to an unsettled period staffing last year, which has now been successfully resolved. In discussions, pupils display a good understanding of what constitutes bullying. They are adamant that, 'There is no bullying, just silly behaviour'. Throughout the day their behaviour is thoughtful and sensible. They are well aware of the

boundaries that are set for them and enjoy the rewards and encouragement for their good achievement and behaviour. Increasingly, pupils take responsibility for their own behaviour and resolve disputes for themselves.

Older pupils take pride in their responsibilities, such as acting as a Rights Respecting ambassador. They are tolerant and demonstrate thoughtful attitudes about the diverse cultures found nationally and globally. Pupils recognise that the curriculum helps them to recognise risk and danger through a range of visits and visitors such as the visiting theatre group production to promote safe habits using new technology. The well organised and managed breakfast club provides an extremely positive start to the school day for pupils of all ages. Robust monitoring of attendance and the introduction of meaningful rewards and celebrations has led to attendance improving significantly and is now consistently high.

### **Leadership and management**

The headteacher has significantly enhanced the ethos and culture of the school since her appointment. Her uncompromising approaches have resulted in rigorous and accurate monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning. As a result, improvement planning sharply focuses upon the correct priorities for the school. Middle leaders are increasingly confident, adding to the momentum of improvement. Good leadership has enabled the school to improve rapidly in most areas. Well-targeted professional development provided by specialists and external agencies adds to the trend of continuous improvement. Increasingly, best practice is shared amongst a cohesive and committed staff team. The governing body is reflective and self-critical and provides challenge to the headteacher in positive ways. Its members have a firm grasp of school strengths and share its high aspirations. Equality of opportunity has been strengthened as gaps in pupils' attainment are closing, individual barriers to progress removed and discrimination successfully tackled. All pupils are given the opportunity to achieve and be successful. The excellent care and support provided for pupils and their families ensures that needs are accurately identified and quickly addressed. The established pattern of continuous improvement demonstrates that the school has a strong capacity to secure and sustain further improvements.

The good curriculum provides a variety of often rich, active learning experiences. All members of the school 'family' have an input into the school's priorities and development. This has ensured a firm focus on the teaching of early reading and writing and themed events throughout the year. Excellent partnership working enhances the quality and breadth of provision, such as the opportunities provided by local secondary schools to develop musical talent and enterprise skills. The extensive range of sporting, artistic and cultural experiences helps to ensure pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The positive engagement of parents and carers ensures that they are able to play a part in school improvement. Safeguarding requirements are met with much best practice adopted.

## 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.**



14 March 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Escomb Primary School, Bishop Auckland DL14 7SR**

We want to thank you all for the really friendly welcome that you gave the inspection team when we visited your school to see how well you were learning. We thoroughly enjoyed our time talking to you.

Escomb is a good and constantly improving school. We were really impressed by the excellent quality of care and support provided for you. You told us that your staff continually encourage and support you to do as well as you possibly can. We were pleased by your good and sometimes exemplary behaviour. You explained that you feel safe and happy as a result. You also told us of your pride in helping your school, such as your notable contributions as school council members and Rights Respecting ambassadors.

The headteacher and the governing body are taking positive action to ensure that the school continues to improve and this can be seen in your improved writing skills. We have asked the school to reduce any variations in the quality of your learning in lessons and check that your teachers continually test your thinking and understanding. We would like them to share their best practice to make certain all of your activities are well-matched to your needs and abilities. We have also asked that your teachers take full advantage of the many varied and interesting experiences provided for you.

You can all play your part by attending regularly and continuing to work as hard as you can. All the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Clive Petts

Lead inspector

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