

Longhorsley St Helen's Church of England Aided First School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 122283 |
| Local authority | Northumberland |
| Inspection number | 380442 |
| Inspection dates | 13–14 March 2012 |
| Lead inspector | Graeme Clarke |

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 3–9 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 81 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Elliott Ward |
| Headteacher | Susan Hall |
| Date of previous school inspection | 22 November 2006 |
| School address | Drummonds Close Longhorsley Morpeth NE65 8UT |
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Introduction

Inspection team

Graeme Clarke

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed five teachers or teaching assistants and made extended or short visits to 13 lessons, of which two were joint observations with the headteacher. He listened to a sample of pupils reading. He joined an assembly, held meetings with parents and carers, a group of pupils, members of the governing body and staff. He examined a selection of pupils' written and mathematics work and scrutinised a range of the school's documentation about arrangements for child protection and safeguarding; the curriculum; reviews of pupils' progress and development planning. Although there were no responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) to aid inspection planning the inspector analysed 44 written questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

Information about the school

Longhorsley St Helen's Church of England is a small first school in rural Northumberland and, since January 2010, is part of a federation with Whalton Church of England First School which is about 12 miles away. The governing body and headteacher, appointed at that time, lead and manage both schools. All pupils are of a White British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is very low compared with that found nationally. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is much lower than average. None have a statement of special educational needs. The school holds the Artsmark Gold, the Activemark and has achieved Healthy School status, in addition to the Extended Services Core Offer for the range of after- school activities available.

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 | 1 |
| Leadership and management | 2 |

Key Findings

- This is a good and improving school. The headteacher and an effective governing body are moving the school forward. A strong staff team works with a common purpose in promoting the school's caring ethos which supports outstanding behaviour and very positive attitudes to learning. The school is not judged to be outstanding because of inconsistencies in aspects of the quality of teaching and in the progress pupils make.
- Achievement is good overall. Most children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make outstanding progress from starting points which are mostly higher than those typical for their age. Progress slows in Years 1 and 2 then accelerates leading to attainment often well above levels expected at the end of Year 4. Pupils presently in Year 4 are making markedly improved progress in writing and mathematics. Pupils read exceptionally well.
- Teaching is good overall. Some is outstandingly successful but in other lessons aspects are less effective. Teachers use information about pupils' performance to tailor activities to pupils' abilities but with mixed success. At times, the pace and challenge in lessons promotes rapid progress although occasionally a slow pace or work that is too difficult limits pupils' learning.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and behave outstandingly well. They are very keen to learn and enthusiastically want to contribute. Exceptionally high levels of endeavour and industry prevail throughout. Pupils conduct themselves considerately and have a strong grasp of safety when using the Internet and the road. Parents and carers are entirely satisfied with the high standards of behaviour in the school.
- Senior leaders and the governing body undertake a rigorous programme of monitoring and evaluation of performance. They draw upon existing best practice here and in their partner school to improve the quality of teaching but recognise there is more to do.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Consolidate initiatives so that the rapid progress made by older pupils is evident throughout the school by:
 - continuing to draw upon the teaching expertise and successful role models available within the federation to extend best practice
 - using information consistently well when planning activities to suit pupils' abilities
 - quickening the pace of learning, particularly during the introductory parts of the lessons, to that of the quality seen in Key Stage 2
 - allocating sufficient time to review learning in a way that gives the teachers a more complete view of pupils' understanding
 - extending the effective practice in marking pupils writing in English to other subjects.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

All parents and carers believe the school meets their children's particular needs and that they are making good progress. Inspection evidence concurs entirely with these views.

Children settle in quickly and enjoy learning. The school very successfully fosters children's confidence and independence as well as their ability to work collaboratively. They happily take part in a range of activities including those led by adults and others they initiate themselves. Older pupils participate wholeheartedly and enthusiastically in activities in lessons. Pupils clearly make good progress in developing handwriting skills and take care to lay out their written and mathematical work neatly and clearly.

By the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, children's abilities in all areas of learning are well above average. Of particular note is the substantial proportion reaching higher levels in aspects of their personal development, mathematical development, physical development and knowledge and understanding of the world. Fewer children reach the higher levels in writing and creative development. Overall, this represents excellent progress and achievement.

Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1 is above the national average. This represents broadly satisfactory progress because the proportion of pupils reaching the highest levels at the end of Year 2 is about the same as it was when they joined Year 1. Over recent years, pupils made consistently good progress in Key Stage 2 and left at the end of Year 4 having improved outstandingly well in reading and well in writing and mathematics. Pupils presently in Year 4 are making rapid progress and are on track to leave with well above expected levels of attainment. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make equally good progress as their classmates.

In lessons and during other activities, pupils in Years 2, and 4 read with notable fluency, expression and a high level of comprehension of the story, characters or factual information. Following the introduction of a new writing initiative, attainment in writing has improved and new approaches to mathematics this year are bearing fruit. Higher attaining Year 4 pupils demonstrate remarkable competence in accurately manipulating formulae and algebraic expressions.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is good overall: a view shared by all parents and carers and pupils. However, quality and impact is not consistent throughout the school. All teaching helps promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Both in lessons and assembly, pupils are successfully encouraged to show self-confidence when speaking and listening to others in discussion. Paired discussions are particularly effective tactics. A carefully-structured thematic curriculum ensures pupils have many opportunities to apply their skills throughout many subjects. Children and pupils are highly motivated to work independently by an on-line mathematics program that consolidates their knowledge and skills.

At its best, outstandingly effective teaching, notably in Key Stage 2, motivates pupils and inspires exceptional learning. Teachers and teaching assistants diligently use information about pupils' prior performance to provide activities that are carefully tailored to pupils' abilities. Work is challenging and makes effective use of targets to set high expectations. Fast paced intriguing introductions quickly engage pupils' attention and lead to a high level of industry. Year 3 and 4 were fascinated by the 'Whittingham Function Machine,' which appeared to take in a number they wrote and produce a multiple of it at the other end. The illusion the teacher cleverly crafted coupled with skilfully-pitched questions evoked enthusiastic responses and encouraged pupils to derive number patterns and explain their reasoning. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to learning and progress. Joint planning, support for learning and shared observations of children's learning, such as in the Early Years Foundation Stage, is particularly effective in fostering rapid progress. Specific support activities, such as developing accurate reading and spelling using a systematic approach to 'letters and sounds' successfully help small groups of older pupils at risk of falling behind.

Occasionally, children and pupils spend too long as a mixed-class group during the introductory phase of the lesson when the pace is pedestrian and the content inappropriately too difficult for many. The rate of learning slows and only a minority of pupils are able to contribute to discussion. In turn, insufficient time is given for other activities, especially for teachers to review learning and accurately gauge the extent of pupils' understanding.

Teachers mark pupils' writing in English work diligently, always praise their accomplishments and give pupils useful pointers for improvement which are followed through. On some occasions though, especially in mathematics and written work in other subjects, insufficient advice is given to help pupils' next steps towards their targets.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils wholeheartedly enjoy school and value highly the friendships they make. Both in conversation and in the survey of their views, all pupils clearly regard behaviour as good, bullying in all forms is minimal and say they feel entirely safe. Parents' and carers' responses in questionnaires show an exceptionally high level of strong agreement that the school's arrangements safeguard their children. Parents and carers too are fully of the view that lessons are not disrupted by misbehaviour and that any bullying is dealt with effectively. Pupils' understanding of right and wrong as well as their natural curiosity about the world around them is brought to bear as they learn and play. Pupils conduct themselves impeccably in lessons, in the outdoor learning area, in assembly and at lunch-time, and on the playground where they enjoy socialising and energetic play without hindrance. They have an excellent grasp of safe use of the internet and of road safety, and are knowledgeable about health and hygiene in relation to looking after themselves and others. Of particular note, and the reason why behaviour for learning is outstanding, are the exceptionally positive attitudes pupils have which makes a major contribution to their progress even when teaching is satisfactory. Always keen to answer questions or contribute to discussion, they give cogent explanations and detailed answers to questions. They tackle tasks promptly and work with commendable endeavour and a very high level of industry. Pupils truly put the school's motto 'We learn and Play Together' into effect and show care and compassion for each other.

Attendance is above average and persistent absence reduced to nil as a result of successful negotiations jointly with the education welfare service. Issues of attendance and holidays in term time are addressed in a common way with partner middle and high schools serving the locality.

Leadership and management

Senior leaders are dedicated and effective in supporting improvement. The governing body provides an invaluable combination of experience to support turning this goal into reality. Through a systematic programme of analysing the performance of groups of pupils and monitoring teaching, leaders and members of the governing body have perceptively and accurately judged the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Their determination to improve continually is reflected in the way they have addressed the need to increase pupils' opportunities for aesthetic and cultural development exceptionally well, an issue signalled by the previous inspection. Since the federation of this school with another two years ago, development planning addresses important priorities, such as improving achievement and teaching. As part of their programme of professional development, senior leaders now exploit the skills and expertise of outstanding teachers within the federation to improve the quality of teaching. They recognise the value of expanding this arrangement and by building upon the strengths of teaching in Key Stage 2 to promote greater consistency of high quality teaching elsewhere in the school. Activities to promote pupils' progress in writing and mathematics are demonstrably effective. Although these gains are recent, the school has clear capacity for further improvement.

The curriculum offers outstanding opportunities to extend pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through a diligently implemented combination of themed activities, visits and visitors. Although tailored carefully to local

circumstances, importantly too, it widens pupils' horizons and understanding of the diversity of life more widely within the United Kingdom and overseas. Topics include many which develop pupils' awareness of their rich local heritage alongside extending their understanding of other faiths and cultures.

Senior leaders and the governing body are committed to ensuring that all pupils have equality of opportunity do well. Any pupil at risk of falling behind is identified early and effective support given. There is no evidence of discrimination of any kind with boys and girls, higher attaining pupils, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, all making equally good or outstanding progress. The governing body ensures the safety and welfare of children and pupils is paramount. Up-to-date training, meticulous vetting and diligent daily routines combine to assure all concerned.

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

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|----------------------------|---|
| 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.



15 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Longhorsley St Helen's Church of England Aided First School, Morpeth, NE65 8UT

Thank you for your welcome and help when I came to inspect your school recently. I was impressed by your politeness and courtesy and delighted to see how much you enjoy all the activities. You are exceptionally well behaved. I was pleased to see how much you contribute to school and village life. All the staff are very proud of you.

Your school gives you a good education. All the adults in the school look after you really well and that is why you feel very safe. They keep a close eye on how well you are doing and want to help you all do your very best. I was pleased with the way you all enjoy school and taking part in lessons. Over the past few years children in the Nursery and Reception class and pupils leaving Year 4 have made good progress. This year many of you are making excellent progress. I was very impressed when some of you came to read to me. Your reading is outstanding. Generally, you are well taught and older pupils have excellent lessons. At some times though some of you had to sit for a long time and not do much at the beginning of the lesson especially.

When I looked at your books I liked the way your teachers let you know how well you are doing in English and let you know how to improve. I have asked them to make sure you all have the very best teaching possible and to help you to see more clearly how to improve when they mark all your work.

You have many opportunities at Longhorsley First School to learn about different aspects of life and these help you to prepare for the future. Some of you will soon be leaving to join a middle school. I hope that you all do really well.

Yours sincerely

Graeme Clarke
Lead Inspector

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