

Milecastle Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108451
Local Authority	Newcastle Upon Tyne
Inspection number	337078
Inspection dates	1–2 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Gordon Potter

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	245
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Gail Henderson
Headteacher	Mrs Lynn Rae
Date of previous school inspection	12 July 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 25 lessons, saw eleven teachers and held meetings with members of the governing body and staff and spoke to pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of school policies and documentation relating to safeguarding and strategic planning, examples of pupils' work, assessment data and monitoring records. They also scrutinised 110 questionnaires returned by parents and carers as well as questionnaires from pupils and staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Whether actions taken by school leaders are having a sustainable effect on raising attainment in writing and mathematics.
- Whether teaching is consistent and strong enough across school to ensure that pupils make better than satisfactory progress.

Information about the school

This school is of a similar size to others of the same type. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is below average. The school has achieved the Activemark and Healthy School status. The school is in its third temporary home this year, following a planned move to allow refurbishment of the school and two forced moves after major structural damage to the original temporary school in December 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

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. There are outstanding outcomes for pupils because, for example, they demonstrate good achievement, outstanding behaviour, an exceptional awareness of how to stay fit and healthy and make an outstanding contribution to the school and the wider community. All staff provide exceptionally sensitive care and support which ensure that pupils' well-being and personal development are promoted extremely well and pupils are happy and feel extremely safe. Pupils make good progress because good teaching makes learning fun and the effective curriculum offers many stimulating experiences, including the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance pupils' research and writing skills. In lessons which are consistently good, teachers make clear what pupils will learn, check their progress through skilful questioning and involve them in interesting activities. There are outstanding procedures to involve parents and carers in their children's learning so that progress is enhanced at home.

The school has much useful information about pupils' skills and abilities which is used well to measure their overall progress. It is used less effectively to plan work that is well-matched to the abilities of individual pupils and so occasionally the pace of learning drops and work lacks challenge for pupils of all abilities. Marking is also used effectively to tell pupils how well they have achieved in individual tasks. However, it does not ensure that pupils are always clear about how to improve their work or how to take the next steps in their learning.

Self-evaluation is accurate, if occasionally over-cautious, and includes all staff and governors in planning and monitoring. Accordingly, the school has initiated appropriate and successful strategies which have returned attainment in writing and mathematics to above average levels after a slight dip. Given its track record, the good quality of provision and outstanding outcomes for pupils, the school's capacity to improve is good and it provides good value for money. Above-average attendance and above-expected attainment overall, allied to well-developed skills in team work and in ICT, contribute to pupils being prepared well for their lives beyond school. Pupils have an extremely strong sense of how to help others and a very clear understanding of life in different faiths and cultures. This understanding, together with the school's development of pupils' interest in the historical and geographical richness of the local area, enhances pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By the summer of 2012, further accelerate pupils' progress and raise their attainment, by:

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- ensuring that data are used well so that work is well-matched to the needs of individual pupils and offers appropriate pace and challenge
- using marking more effectively to help pupils know exactly how to improve their work and take the next steps in their learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

The extent to which pupils achieve and enjoy their work is good. Pupils are extremely courteous, have excellent attitudes, form very positive relationships and show great keenness to do well in their work. They especially enjoy challenging and lively activities, such as a project to create a school website which offers opportunities to use modern video technology or using puppets to tell the story of the first moon-landing.

Previously, the skills and abilities with which children join the Early Years Foundation Stage have tended to be as expected for their age. In recent years, more pupils have entered with lower skill levels so they are now typically below expectations overall. Pupils make good progress to attain standards which are above average at the end of Year 6. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well cared for and supported in their learning and they make good progress because their work offers appropriate challenge and interest.

Pupils are exceptionally aware of the importance of a healthy diet and of taking plenty of exercise. This is reflected in their very enthusiastic involvement in physical education and the high take-up of healthy school meals. They care for one another very well, have great respect for each other and for the adults in the school, and say they feel extremely safe. Pupils are confident that they know exactly what to do in the event of a concern.

Pupils make a highly positive contribution to the school community through the school council. This meets regularly and plays a major role in helping pupils to behave exceptionally well and feel very safe. This has been especially true in the difficult circumstances they have recently endured. Pupils willingly take on roles as playground and lunchtime helpers and peer mediators. They support a range of charities and participate in competitions with other local schools and in activities with the local church and village which celebrate their faith and local history. Above-average attendance rates, excellent punctuality, strong literacy skills and confidence in group work, mean that pupils are well-equipped for their future economic well-being.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teachers strive to make learning fun, make it clear to pupils what they will learn and how they will know if they have succeeded. Teachers use questions well to ascertain what pupils already know, to check that they have made progress and to extend their thinking. They employ ICT well to engage pupils and plan opportunities for pupils to learn through practical activities, including experiments, games and drama. Occasionally, work is not well-matched to the abilities of individual pupils so that the pace of learning drops and work lacks challenge for pupils of all abilities. Marking does not always make clear to pupils exactly what they need to do to improve their work.

The curriculum contributes to pupils' good progress by offering a range of stimulating activities which are increasingly helping them to see the links between subjects and develop and apply important skills. For example, work on the Second World War successfully develops imagination, creativity and writing skills. There are good procedures to encourage reading. Opportunities for pupils to develop skills in investigative and problem-solving activities in mathematics have had an impact on raising attainment. Well-planned enrichment activities, including visits to places of worship, the Centre for Life science museum in Newcastle and opportunities to work with a Bangladeshi cook, help to develop pupils' skills in cookery and science and their understanding of other faiths and cultures. There are many popular extra-curricular clubs which promote learning and

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enjoyment in sporting, arts and environmental activities, including film club, recycling and the development of the school garden.

Staff's extremely detailed knowledge of the personal and emotional needs of individual pupils is put to excellent use. As a result, pupils are cared for exceptionally well, their varied learning needs are met and they develop self-esteem, respect and a sense of responsibility. Highly-effective partnership work with families has improved attendance. Well-established and highly-effective practices involve parents and carers when their children enter school, move from class to class and transfer to secondary school. This exceptionally high level of care has been particularly evident in ensuring that pupils have remained extremely settled and happy throughout a difficult period of change.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The highly-experienced and well-respected headteacher has rigorously and skilfully pursued and implemented strategies that have brought about an improvement in school effectiveness. Very ably supported by the deputy headteacher, she has established and developed an enthusiastic and vibrant leadership team which has introduced initiatives that have raised attainment and effected improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They have developed effective systems for tracking progress and monitoring the effectiveness of teaching and have made the curriculum more exciting. All staff have roles and responsibilities within clearly-defined teams and are excited about their contribution to the development of key areas of the curriculum. They welcome these opportunities to contribute to decision-making and the very detailed school improvement plan and to advance their own professional development. The governing body offers good support and challenge to the school and has developed effective procedures to monitor learning.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils are good, meet government requirements and rigorously secure pupils' safety. For example, all aspects of ensuring that the move to the temporary site was safe were well-managed. The school has close links with outside agencies to support the pupils' wide-ranging needs. There is a clear commitment to promoting equal opportunities and to ensuring that discrimination against any group is avoided at all times. Careful analysis of assessment information means that any variations in performance are identified and resolved quickly. The school is proud of its inclusive nature and makes a good contribution to community cohesion. The sense of community in the school is strong and there are excellent links with the local community. Pupils have a very strong awareness of Great Britain as a diverse, multicultural society and a developing understanding of life in other countries. The school has introduced a range of

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exceptionally effective initiatives to involve parents in their children's learning, including supporting learning at home and regular information about their children's progress.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children's skills on entry to Reception tend to be weakest in communication, language and literacy, problem-solving, reasoning and numeracy. Effective teaching, which is skilfully directed to develop skills in counting, speaking and listening and linking sounds and letters, helps children to make good progress from their starting points. Children thrive on creative activities such as craft, painting, writing and imaginative play and develop as confident and caring individuals. They particularly enjoy digging in their garden and making dragons to celebrate Chinese New Year. The teachers offer children many challenging activities both indoors and outdoors, although some opportunities are missed for children to choose and organise their own learning.

Staff ensure that requirements regarding children's safety are met and encourage children to assess risks themselves. A range of healthy snacks and drinking water, opportunities for exercise and clear guidelines for hand-washing, all help children to develop a good understanding of how to stay healthy. The effective leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage leader ensures that teaching is good because it is securely based on the knowledge of how young children learn and develop. Observations and assessments are used effectively to support and extend children's learning and identify areas for improvement. There are highly-effective partnerships with parents and carers that enable children to settle quickly into the Reception class and allow parents and carers to understand how well their children are progressing, especially through children's learning journals.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers responding to the questionnaire was above average for a school of this type. The respondents support the school and its leaders extremely strongly with almost all being happy with their child's experience at school and all aspects of its work. The inspection findings reflect these very positive views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Milecastle Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 110 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 245 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	77	70	30	27	0	0	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	84	76	24	22	0	0	1	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	56	51	49	45	2	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	64	58	44	40	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	81	74	28	25	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	64	58	40	36	2	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	59	54	49	45	1	1	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	61	55	42	38	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	70	64	39	35	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	58	53	46	42	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	56	51	49	45	0	0	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	80	73	28	25	0	0	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	71	65	34	31	2	2	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



3 February 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Milecastle Primary School, Newcastle, NE15 9JN

Thank you so much for making us so welcome when we inspected your school.

You go to a good school. We were extremely impressed by how hard you work in lessons and by your friendliness. You behave exceptionally well, show great respect for one another and look after one another admirably. You are very polite and helpful and we enjoyed talking to you about your school. You told us that you look forward to coming to school because you like your teachers and appreciate the activities the school provides for you, such as visits and clubs. We were particularly impressed by how safe you feel, how much you know about leading a healthy life and the way you are involved in helping to raise money to improve the school and for charities. Your parents and carers like the school very much. Your teachers try hard to make your lessons fun and all staff care for you exceptionally well. Your teachers also know what to do to make the school even better. They have agreed with me that they should do the following things to help your school to improve even more:

- plan work that is always just difficult enough for each of you
- make sure that they tell you exactly what you need to do to improve when they mark your work.

You can help by continuing to do your best and keeping up your good attendance. We wish you every success in the future, especially when you are settled again in your own school building.

Yours sincerely

Mr Gordon Potter

Lead Inspector

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