

Byers Green Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114070
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	357475
Inspection dates	9–10 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Kate Pringle

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	78
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Gordon Henderson
Headteacher	Mr William Kirtley
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Wear View Byers Green, Spennymoor County Durham DL16 7PN
Telephone number	01388 603483
Fax number	01388 661171
Email address	byersgreen@durhamlearning.net

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M2 7LA

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Six lessons and four teachers were observed. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of the governing body and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at pupils' books, assessment information, policies and procedures, school development plans and updates of pupils' progress. Views of stakeholders were also considered through questionnaire responses from 54 parents and carers, 12 staff and 44 pupils.

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

- How effectively provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage enables children to make good progress.

-How well teaching and learning opportunities challenge the needs of pupils of differing abilities in order to secure good progress for all groups across the school.

- How well the curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to become independent learners and make best use of their skills in reading, writing, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) in other subjects.
- How successfully all leaders and managers actively challenge school improvement, including outcomes for pupils.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average-sized school which serves the surrounding rural area. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than average. There are no pupils from minority ethnic groups and therefore none who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is higher than the national average. Presently, there are no pupils with a statement of special educational needs.

The school holds the following awards: Basic Skills, Activemark, Healthy School status, International Schools (Intermediate) and the Financial Management Standard in Schools (FMSiS).

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 good school is recognised as such by parents and carers who praise the quality of care, guidance and support that both they and their children receive. The vast majority of parents and carers support all aspects of school life and value the commitment of staff to provide an environment which is happy and secure. One parent noted, 'School is really good at solving problems you have with your child if they don't understand things.' Pupils say that they enjoy school and feel valued and this is reflected in their above average attendance. Pupils show great respect for themselves and for others and, as a result, their behaviour is outstanding.

Good attitudes to learning mean that pupils engage positively with teachers and other staff. They are well motivated and show great interest in the many new experiences provided for them. Overall, pupils make good progress and leave Year 6 with levels of attainment above those expected for their age. However, progress across years can be variable. It accelerates in Key Stage 2, where teaching is strongest. Progress is not always as good in other years because teachers' use of assessment information to plan challenging activities is inconsistent. Marking does not fully enable pupils to understand their achievements or their next steps in learning. The Early Years Foundation Stage is warm and welcoming to young children and they settle quickly and happily. However, assessment is not used to the best advantage and progress is satisfactory because too few activities challenge children to progress more quickly. Additionally, while adult-led activities are well established, insufficient opportunities exist for children to choose how they learn through creative activities which encourage problem solving and investigation.

Leaders and managers work well together, sharing the same aspirations. They are highly motivated and implement their roles effectively. Self-evaluation is accurate and the identification of what needs to be done is addressed through a programme of support and monitoring. Effective and focused development plans demonstrate a clear drive to improve outcomes for pupils. Rising attendance, improved behaviour and higher standards are the result of the developing curriculum, the introduction of new assessment strategies and better opportunities for pupils to use their skills in reading, writing, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) in other subjects. Overall, the school demonstrates a good capacity for improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure consistency and good progress across all years by:
 - improving the use of assessment data to plan challenging activities that are well matched to pupils' individual abilities

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- using marking to clearly indicate success against individual targets and inform pupils about how to improve their work
- increasing opportunities for pupils to have more understanding of their targets and next steps in learning.
- Accelerate the rate of progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - ensuring that activities help children to learn independently and provide more opportunities for creative thinking, problem solving and investigation
 - using the assessment of children's successes to identify the needs of children of differing abilities more accurately and provide greater individual challenge.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils enjoy school and it is not surprising that attendance is above average. They speak of positive relationships with staff and the good support they receive if they have concerns. Such positive attitudes, together with their excellent behaviour, motivate pupils to participate effectively in learning. Pupils relate well to their teachers. They want to please and are eager to engage in their tasks and work hard. They engage particularly well in lessons where they have practical tasks to be creative, investigate and problem solve. Most children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills in line with those expected for their age. Satisfactory progress over the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 enables pupils to attain average standards by Year 2. At the end of Year 6, the improving trend of recent years has been maintained and attainment is above average. Progress accelerates in Key Stage 2 and this contributes greatly to the standards pupils attain when they leave school. The more-able pupils make especially good progress in Key Stage 2, with an increasing number exceeding the level expected for their age. The overall progress of all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, is good.

Pupils speak maturely about rights and responsibilities. They say there is very little bullying or racism and any such behaviour is addressed quickly and effectively by staff. The school is very friendly because pupils are polite and show respect for each other and for adults. Pupils understand their increasing responsibility for their own safety and can talk about how provision such as e-safety, the walking bus and cycling lessons help them acknowledge and deal with dangers. Pupils appreciate the many opportunities provided to ensure they understand the benefits of a healthy lifestyle through making the right choices in their diet and engaging in a range of physical activity. The active roles pupils fulfil as mediators, buddies and school councillors enable them to make good contributions to their school and to the local community. Through their curriculum, and through developing links with schools in other parts of England and abroad, they are gaining a good understanding of the lives of others from different cultures and backgrounds.

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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	2
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
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	2

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?

In the best lessons, pupils are encouraged to reflect and consider, to investigate and to use their skills in different ways. In these lessons, pupils' progress is rapid and there is individual challenge because of teachers' high expectations. For example, pupils in one class were all fully engaged in devising instructions for a computer game as they learnt how to use powerful verbs. Although a number of assessment strategies have been introduced, not all teachers use assessment information well enough on a daily basis to set tasks which challenge the differing needs of pupils. This means that learning is not always as effective as it could be and the pace of progress can slow. A colour-coded marking system linked to the correct use of grammar is in place and pupils say it helps them to recognise errors and improve their work. However, the use of individual targets for pupils is less consistent. Consequently, pupils have little understanding of the progress they make against targets and what they need to learn next.

Teachers make effective links across the curriculum enabling pupils to use their skills in literacy and numeracy to support their learning. This is especially true of their ICT skills, which are exceptional by Year 6. Pupils manipulate programs, pictures, the internet and fonts to create a range of documents to demonstrate their learning across the curriculum. There are increasing opportunities to be creative. For example, in one class, pupils used their observations of different patterns on animal skins to create their own designs which they made into stamps and printed their own patterns. A range of good quality enrichment

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activities provides additional opportunities for pupils to extend their skills through sporting and creative activities. A good proportion of pupils take advantage of outdoor activities through residential stays, which helps to raise their confidence and self-esteem.

Staff know pupils very well and parents say that their children are well cared for and looked after. Pupils who have particular needs are quickly identified. Well-established systems of support and intervention are implemented using a range of outside agencies and partners. As a result, such pupils make the same progress as their classmates. The school works hard to promote the values and benefits of good attendance, which is evident in the improvement over past years. Pupils are guided well in personal development and are encouraged towards making responsible decisions. Positive partnerships with a range of agencies and schools support the school well. This ensures that induction and transition are strong and the experiences of starting school and of transfer to secondary school are positive.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, other leaders and managers understand their school well. Morale is high and staff feel that their opinions and contributions are valued. Leaders and managers work effectively together towards the identified areas for improvement, central to which are the outcomes for pupils. Teaching and learning are successfully monitored. A professional development programme and the sharing of good practice have successfully contributed towards improving pupils' attainment and progress.

Governance is good. Governors know that improvement over recent years has been effective and they have high aspirations for continued development. They understand and take advantage of their role to challenge and support the school and do so effectively to influence day-to-day provision and future direction. Safeguarding requirements are diligently met and the school supports, informs and educates pupils and parents very well in relation to pupil safety. Well-defined strategies to ensure equal opportunities mean that discrimination of any kind is not tolerated and all groups of pupils are encouraged and supported well to make equal progress. The school has clear actions identified to further improve community cohesion. Good links abound within the local community and links with a number of educational establishments nationally and abroad have been established, although some are more embedded than others. The school provides good value for money.

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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	2
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, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, settle quickly into this warm environment, where they learn to share equipment and take turns. Children are looked after well and they have good relationships with their teacher. This means that children feel secure as they play and learn happily together. It is very clear that children enjoy learning. Most enter Reception with skills which are typical for their age, although skills in linking sounds and letter, reading and writing are below those in other areas of learning. Though progress is satisfactory and children reach levels expected by the end of Reception, skills in literacy remain lower than in other areas of the curriculum. Activities are planned around central themes and children enjoy accessing new experiences.

Adult-led learning is well established. However, the overall quality of learning is hindered because children have insufficient opportunities to investigate, problem solve and be creative. This means that children's ability to become independent learners is limited. The progress children make is being recorded through the development of 'learning logs'. However, limited use is made of this information to identify the next steps in learning. As a result, progress is not as rapid as it might be because assessment information does not link strongly enough to future activities. Links with parents and carers and with other partners, including those providing pre-school and nursery provision, are well established and enable children to settle quickly and be supported well.

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

There was a high rate of return of questionnaires from parents and carers and the vast majority of parents and carers who responded were highly positive about the school. They greatly appreciate the care given to their children and are extremely confident that their children are happy and safe and that teachers meet their children's needs well. Few issues were raised by parents and carers and there was no obvious pattern to those raised. All were fully investigated and form part of the evidence base used to arrive at the inspection judgements.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Byers Green 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 inspector received 54 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 78 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	30	56	24	44	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	41	76	12	22	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	28	52	25	46	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	30	56	22	41	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	35	65	17	31	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	30	56	23	43	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	33	61	18	33	2	4	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)	27	50	23	43	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	29	54	25	46	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	25	46	28	52	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	24	44	28	52	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	27	50	25	46	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	36	67	17	31	0	0	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.



11 February 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Byers Green Primary School, Spennymoor, DL16 7PN

Thank you so much for the warm welcome you gave to inspectors when we visited your school recently. It was lovely to talk with many of you and thank you to those of you who filled in the questionnaires. They helped us to understand how you feel about your school and the people who work in it. We judge that yours is a good school. You make good progress overall and by the time you leave Year 6, attainment is above average. You say that adults in the school look after you well and this means that you feel safe and confident. We know that you enjoy the many experiences your teachers give you to learn new skills. You are happy at school and we found your behaviour to be excellent; your parents believe this too.

The inspectors are asking your headteacher, teachers and governors to improve a few things to help all of you to make better progress as you move through school. We want them to make sure that all teachers check that your work is well matched to what you each need to learn and that marking helps you understand what you need to learn next. It would help if you were more involved in your target-setting and assessment. In the Reception class, we would like more opportunities for children to be challenged and to become independent through activities which allow them to be creative, to solve problems and investigate.

We wish you every success for the future and hope that you will help your school to become even better.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Kate Pringle

Lead inspector

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