

Seaton Sluice First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122234
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	359197
Inspection dates	5–6 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Carole Snee

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	149
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Campbell
Headteacher	Mrs Gillian Love
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Ten lessons were observed, which were taught by nine teachers. Work from all classes was scrutinised and meetings were held with groups of pupils, representatives of the governing body and staff. Parents' and carers' views were sought both inside and outside the school during the inspection. The views of parents, carers, pupils and staff were also gathered through questionnaires. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at planning, monitoring files and policies as well as the school's data on attainment and progress. The inspectors analysed the 85 questionnaires completed by parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- How leadership and management at all levels contribute to the school's self-evaluation, so that strategies for improvement are clearly targeted at greatest need.
- The effective use of assessment by all staff to inform their planning and teaching.
- Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, to ensure that children are getting the best possible start in their school life.

Information about the school

Seaton Sluice is smaller than other first schools nationally. The school is part of the Seaton Valley Learning Partnership of Schools that consists of eight schools, which provide for pupils aged three to 18 years. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly in line with the national average. There are currently no pupils with a statement of special educational needs. Almost all of the pupils are of White British heritage. There are no pupils who speak English as an additional language. The school has Healthy School status and the Eco award. The majority of teaching staff work part-time and job share responsibilities.

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

Seaton Sluice First School provides a good standard of education. Pupils say they really enjoy coming to school and parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive. Typical of the views held by parents is, 'My child asks to go to school even on the weekend! She always says, "I love big school" – what more can I say!'

There are outstanding aspects of pupils' personal development. Behaviour, the degree to which they feel safe, preparation for their next stages in education, the way that they contribute to school life and the community, and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are all first-rate. These qualities make pupils' outcomes excellent; however, pupils' learning and progress fluctuate a little throughout the school. These minor patches of slower progress, particularly within Key Stage 1, do not however detract from the school's excellent promotion of equal opportunities.

The vast majority of children enter the Nursery with skills and knowledge broadly typical for their age. Good progress thereafter is demonstrated by the fact that by the end of Year 4, attainment is high when compared to that expected nationally for pupils of their age. This all makes pupils' achievement outstanding overall. The quality of teaching is good with some outstanding features. Interesting lessons are planned from a remarkably rich and varied curriculum. Pupils are actively involved and assessment is used thoroughly, in most cases, to check children's understanding and challenge them further.

The headteacher and the deputy headteacher make a strong team with a shared vision and determination to improve standards even further. Good systems of self-evaluation allow them to possess a detailed knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Very good use has been made of the strong partnerships with other schools to enrich and strengthen the curriculum. Not least in the excellent opportunities for pupils to relate to others from different cultures and backgrounds, which enhance strongly their sense of community cohesion.

The school's good capacity to improve even further is demonstrated by the positive advances made since its last inspection. Standards are now high and behaviour is outstanding. The curriculum contains wider horizons for pupils and the Early Years Foundation Stage has been improved well in the respect of outdoor learning and a general focus on children initiating their own learning.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that pupils' progress is consistently at least good throughout the school, by:
 - improving the quality and use of assessment, particularly in Key Stage 1

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- improving the quality and impact of teaching, particularly where responsibilities for classes are shared between staff.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils' attainment is high and their progress is good because lessons have a positive impact on learning. Pupils behave very well in lessons and are keen to work together to produce their best work. They listen attentively and are enthusiastic about rising to the challenges set by ambitious teaching. They respond very well to teachers' questions and listen to the contributions of others with respect.

All major groups of pupils achieve outstandingly well. There are no particular differences between the progress of boys and girls, for example. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified early and supported well by an effective mix of carefully targeted support. Consequently, they too make good progress. Only occasionally does progress falter in Years 1 and 2 where some pupils work at tasks that are too easy or too hard.

The many outstanding qualities of pupils' personal development are recognised within the completed questionnaires that they presented to inspectors. These were extremely positive and highlighted how much pupils enjoy school. A typical view was that, 'Learning in this school is fun – but sometimes tricky.' All are convinced that recent developments to the curriculum make learning more interesting and help them achieve more. They feel very safe in school and readily take on additional responsibilities to help the school run smoothly. They also express confidence about moving onto the middle school and feel, correctly, that they are very well prepared. Their understanding of recycling and its impact on the planet, as part of their work towards an Eco award, is outstanding. Pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is reflected in their extremely positive attitudes towards school, each other and the world in general.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	1
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	2
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	1
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?

Teaching is good overall. At its best, learning is planned systematically to include interesting and challenging tasks that engage the pupils, who consequently work at a brisk pace and make good progress. Teachers and their assistants motivate pupils well by identifying and praising their achievements. The school has recently introduced very clear guidelines for assessing pupils' work. In the best lessons, pupils are given clear information on how to improve their work.

The new system of assessment is not used so well in every case. This results in some work being set that does not match pupils' capabilities entirely: interest in work wanes under these circumstances. This is more often the case where two teachers share the responsibility for a class. The school appreciates this issue and is working hard to resolve it. However, there is, on occasions, some slower progress compared to that found in the most successful lessons.

The outstanding curriculum results in first rate achievement and outcomes generally. It has been very carefully tailored to provide a wide range of interesting and challenging activities. Opportunities to use and apply the basic skills of literacy and numeracy are woven skilfully throughout. Imaginative use is made of information and communication technology. The school's partnership with other local schools in introducing a new strategy to improve writing has been very successful, and significantly increased expertise in this area.

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Care, guidance and support are good. Adults work hard to foster good relationships with all children. There are no exclusions and the school has effective links with outside agencies and neighbouring schools. Support for transition to the middle school is particularly strong, with visits beginning in Year 2. Staff know the pupils well and provide any additional help that is required.

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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and deputy headteacher work closely with the governing body, which is knowledgeable and supportive. It is very well led by a chair whose expertise in managing budgets has already benefited the school considerably. The governors are now, rightly, focusing on monitoring strategies to improve the consistency of pupils' progress across the school. Despite some training needed for newly appointed subject managers, leadership at all levels has the necessary ambition and drive to help make every aspect of the school as outstanding as the outcomes in pupils' personal development.

Parents and carers are regularly consulted and are encouraged to play a full part in the learning and personal development of their children. Discrimination is not tolerated and, notwithstanding some minor differences in pupils' progress, the promotion of equal opportunities is excellent. The school has developed very productive partnerships with other organisations and schools that enhance provision for vulnerable pupils and enrich the curriculum. Community cohesion is outstanding, partly because recent developments have resulted in pupils having a very strong recognition and respect for those from different cultures and religions, including those from within their own community.

The school's systems to safeguard pupils are good, with all staff being suitably trained in all key areas. Even the youngest children are being supported to have a good understanding of how to keep safe by the use of two 'safety checkers' to make daily checks in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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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	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children's confidence grows enormously as soon as they enter school. They become keen explorers and learners in both classes. Consistently good teaching enables children to progress well and reach above expected levels by the end of Reception.

Children acquire the skills they need for the future well. These are developed through the consistent use of routines, in both Nursery and Reception. Children are given responsibility for small tasks and allowed to initiate their own activities, which fosters their ability to make appropriate decisions and choices. Very good use is made of the outdoor environment, which provides a wide range of stimulating activities - making rock pools and building large constructions are firm favourites. Children demonstrate how to stay safe and healthy through their very good behaviour.

The good leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage takes every opportunity to refine and enhance practice further. The curriculum, for example, has improved the development of personal and social skills, which are at the heart of all developments. This was exemplified wonderfully when a child working in the cafe could not remember how to write his full name; immediately another child working alongside him said, 'Don't worry – it's on your name tag – I'll go and get it for you.'

Assessment is increasingly being used effectively throughout by all staff, who monitor and record children's progress well. Staff work very well together so that provision is closely matched to the needs of individuals. Transition arrangements are strong and these are closely linked to the good relationships with parents and carers.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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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 large majority of parents and carers that responded to the inspection questionnaire are pleased with the school's work. They report that their children enjoy school, the teaching is good and that their children are kept safe. A very large majority feel that their children are making enough progress and that they are well prepared for the future. Small numbers of parents and carers raised concerns about the school keeping them informed about their child's progress, the help they receive from the school to support their child's learning, and how well the school was led and managed. Inspectors found that these aspects were good but that the school is vigilant and is willing to listen to any misgivings from parents and carers. A very small minority also expressed concerns with the large size of some classes, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Evidence during the inspection showed that although registration groups are large, the actual teaching groups are much smaller, and meet the needs of the children very effectively.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Seaton Sluice First 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 85 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 149 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	64	75	20	24	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	61	72	22	26	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	41	48	36	42	5	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	49	58	28	33	3	4	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	55	65	26	31	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	43	51	32	38	6	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	47	55	36	42	0	0	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)	48	56	31	36	2	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	46	54	32	38	3	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	32	38	43	51	5	6	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	33	39	39	46	10	12	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	43	51	27	32	13	15	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	55	65	26	31	3	4	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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 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. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

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.



7 October 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Seaton Sluice First School, Whitley Bay NE26 4BX

My colleague and I agree with what you told us loud and clear in your questionnaires – you have a good school! We very much enjoyed meeting you and talking to you, especially when you were telling us all about your fun lessons and how well your teachers and helpers look after you. We saw how well you behave and how kind you are to each other. We really enjoyed observing the Reception and Nursery children making watery rock pools and digging in the mud. As for 'The Corpse Bride', what fantastic paintings! You learn such a lot in your school that, by the time you leave, you know a lot more than other children who are the same age as you.

By way of improvements to the school, I have asked your headteacher and the governing body to make sure that your learning and progress are consistently good throughout the school. This applies particularly to those of you in Years 1 and 2. Teaching in that part of the school needs to assess in more detail what learning is successful and how improvements can be made. Teachers who work with classes for part of the week should work even more closely together so that you have really good lessons all the time.

You have a lot of teachers in your school who work hard to make it a great place to be; your attendance is getting better and better, so we know you must be enjoying it. Keep trying to do your best at all times, so that you can make everyone even more proud of you.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Carole Snee

Lead inspector

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