

# Belford First School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	122244
<b>Local Authority</b>	Northumberland
<b>Inspection number</b>	359200
<b>Inspection dates</b>	7–8 October 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Clive Petts

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	64
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Dr S Miller
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs R Smith
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12 February 2008
<b>School address</b>	West Street Belford Northumberland NE70 7QD
<b>Telephone number</b>	01668 213372
<b>Fax number</b>	
<b>Email address</b>	admin@belfordfirst.northumberland.sch.uk

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Inspectors visited six lessons and observed four class teachers. They held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils, analysed 33 questionnaire responses from parents and carers and looked at questionnaires completed by staff and pupils. The inspectors also looked at development plans, pupils' progress and attainment data, documents relating to the safeguarding of pupils, and school policies and procedures; scrutinised pupils' current and past work and reviewed School Improvement Partner reports and spoke to a local authority officer.

The inspectors reviewed many aspects of the school's work and looked in detail at the following.

- The quality of teaching and learning across the school and its effectiveness in accelerating pupils' progress and raising attainment.
- The effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision in enabling children to make at least good progress.
- The extent to which senior leaders are demonstrating the capacity to bring about and sustain further improvement.

## Information about the school

Belford is a smaller-than-average village school serving the surrounding rural communities. All the pupils are of White British heritage. The percentage known to be eligible for a free school meal is below average. An above average proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. A similar proportion has a statement of special educational needs. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of a small number of children in one of three mixed-aged classes. The provision for childcare and pre-school is St Mary's Playschool and Baby and Toddler group on site, and also Lucker Nature Kindergarten, which is a private day nursery situated five miles south of the school. They are subject to separate inspections and will receive their own inspection reports. This term the school is being led by an experienced acting headteacher prior to the designate headteacher taking up post in January 2011.

**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

Belford is a good school where very good pastoral care allows pupils' personal development to flourish. As a result their behaviour is outstanding. Despite unsettled senior leadership, middle managers, capably supported by the governing body, have been a driving force maintaining a happy, friendly atmosphere where pupils' progress matters. The acting headteacher has very quickly had a positive impact, adding to the momentum to secure faster improvement with a clear vision for the way ahead. Consequently, the school has a good capacity to continue to improve. Parents and carers are extremely positive in their support. One parent comment sums up their current view, 'This has been a testing time with staff changes, but the children are unaffected by the changes.'

Most children start school with skills below those expected for their age, often with weaknesses linking their sounds and letters to form simple words. They make a rapid start in Reception even though opportunities to discover things for themselves are limited when outside. Attainment at the end of Year 4 is typically average, although it does vary year-on-year with small cohorts in each year. Overall, from their individual starting points pupils make good progress. Pupils' achievement is good because teaching is never less than good and is often inspiring, stretching pupils' thinking and adding to their enjoyment. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make excellent progress because needs are identified early, and well targeted, helpful support is effective. Occasionally, tasks are not sufficiently challenging for pupils of all abilities and this slows down the pace of learning in lessons.

Pupils report that they feel safe and value the time staff take to resolve any of their worries or concerns. They understand the benefits of keeping fit and staying healthy. Their excellent relationships are reflected in the way they look after each other. Their sense of fairness and right and wrong is a strength. Pupils gain great benefit from the excellent links the school builds with parents and carers, the local community, partner schools and support agencies. For example, successfully managing their own garden and growing fruit and vegetables with the support and expertise of local volunteers.

The school's judgement of its strengths and weaknesses is accurate. The analysis of performance data and monitoring of actions taken to bring about change are developing but with the temporary leadership are not yet fully embedded.

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

- Further raise attainment and sharpen procedures to check and evaluate pupils' progress by:
  - ensuring that monitoring and evaluating procedures give close attention to the impact of all actions on raising achievement

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- ensuring pupils always have tasks that are sufficiently demanding
- using assessment information consistently to inform pupils how to improve.
- Develop outdoor learning for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
  - providing opportunities for children to find things out for themselves and to explore and investigate the world around them.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils thoroughly enjoy their learning activities, achieve well and become confident and independent learners. They enjoy practical activities and were observed totally absorbed finding lines of symmetry on geometrical shapes and then using a mirror to check if their solutions were correct. Their good progress through school results in attainment that is average, or sometimes a little above average, by the time they leave Year 4. However, there remains scope for tasks to be even more thought provoking and complex to enable all pupils to make as much progress as possible. The teacher's progress information shows that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make excellent progress because fun, interesting activities are effectively tailored to their age and needs.

Pupils respond receptively to the high expectations for their personal development and the positive role models all staff provide. Pupils have an excellent grasp of social and moral issues. They support the community, for example, arranging for surplus vegetables from their garden to help feed the homeless in Newcastle. A good range of experiences of the diverse beliefs and cultures in the world helps them develop respect for difference. Behaviour in lessons, around school and on visits out of school is extremely sensible and considerate. This is also apparent in the high quality of relationships they enjoy with staff. As one pupil remarked, 'We are all very nice to each other.' Pupils understand the benefits that keeping active and attending regularly can bring. Their good academic skills and many and varied opportunities to take on responsibility and show initiative prepare pupils well for the next stages in their learning.

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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
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	1
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> 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?

Pupils' enjoy their learning because the good and sometimes inspiring teaching is imaginative, lively and consistently captures pupils' interests. Pupils are given the confidence to work both independently and collaboratively, such as when reporting for the Belford Bulletin, the award winning school newspaper. Marking is positive and helpful but does not always consistently inform pupils how to improve even more. Assessment is accurate but there is room to use the data more regularly to plan future learning and set even more challenging improvement targets.

The curriculum provides a good variety of first-hand experiences well matched to the pupils' abilities and talents. It is subject to regular improvement to ensure it remains relevant and able to provide opportunities for pupils to apply their skills, such as using more advanced computer software to assemble their newspaper for publication. Pupils enjoy the visits, visitors to school and extra activities all of which enrich the curriculum. One group of pupils spoke enthusiastically about their recent visit to nearby Cragside, home of the Victorian inventor who was the first to power his house with hydroelectricity.

The pupils receive very good guidance and support, which is a developing strength of the school. Parents and carers are appreciative of the lengths to which staff go to enable their children to enjoy what the school has to offer. Pupils who are potentially vulnerable or whose circumstances may be challenging are given all the help and support they need,

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including specialist help from a range of support agencies. The school raises pupils' aspirations and ensures they can make well-informed choices about their future.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## How effective are leadership and management?

During the unsettled period of staffing, the school has gained much benefit from the appointment of an experienced acting headteacher, very capable middle managers and an astutely led governing body. Teaching and learning is sensitively managed and profiting from the encouraging atmosphere. There is a clear sense of purpose and this is firmly focussed on adding to the quality of learning and raising achievement. Although the use of assessment is strengthening, systems to analyse data are not yet fully embedded. Nevertheless, the overall equality of opportunity is good with clear plans to meet the needs of all. This effective commitment to ensure all are included is reflected in pupils sharing the same happy school experiences. The school's excellent partnerships with parents and carers add to the strong sense of family. First-rate links with the on-site childcare and pre-school helps identify children's needs early and boosts the quality of provision. Pupils are supported very well during the transition to the adjacent middle school. Safeguarding requirements are met and systems to protect children are fully understood by all staff. The governing body is effective and governors have a good grasp of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They are progressively adding to the rigour of monitoring and evaluation and the shaping of strategic direction. Community cohesion is carefully planned and promoted well with some innovative approaches to promote pupils' understanding of the diverse world in which they live, for example, reporting on earthquakes on the Caribbean island of St Lucia for the Belford Bulletin.

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*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## **Early Years Foundation Stage**

Children thoroughly enjoy their time in the vibrant, stimulating atmosphere. They settle exceptionally quickly in the happy, friendly mixed-age class. Staff place strong emphasis on developing early independence and adhering to safe routines, for example, making certain all join in, share and take turns. Most children enter Reception with skills below those typical for their age, often with weak communication skills. All make good progress overall working towards the skills expected of them by the time they reach Year 1. Nearly all make excellent progress linking sounds and letters and developing their early writing skills. This is evident when Sam the rabbit joins in their sound and letter practices. Children thrive alongside older pupils in the supportive, caring atmosphere. Children confidently lead their own learning and staff questioning adds to the challenges and triggers their curiosity. Regular observations and assessments are detailed and well illustrated in the children's individual learning journal. Experiences of visits and visitors to the school are also recorded although there is some scope for more contributions from parents and carers to add to their children's learning. Opportunities to extend their learning outside are limited. A new, secure outdoor space which will provide a high quality environment in which children can explore and investigate is in the advanced stages of planning reflecting the high aspirations and ambition of leadership and management.



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*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
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

Over half of all parents and carers returned the questionnaire, which expressed their views of the school. These views were overwhelmingly positive about the quality of what the school provides and nearly all felt that their children are safe and really happy in school. They speak highly of the school's friendly, welcoming atmosphere and the excellent pastoral care their children receive. The inspection entirely endorses these views.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Belford 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 33 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 64 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	21	64	12	36	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	24	73	8	24	1	3	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	13	39	18	55	2	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	16	48	13	39	3	9	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	17	52	13	39	2	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	14	42	14	42	4	12	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	13	39	17	52	3	9	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)	10	30	20	61	1	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	12	36	19	58	1	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	13	39	18	55	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	11	33	18	55	3	9	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	12	36	20	61	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	17	52	15	45	1	3	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](http://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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Belford First School, Belford, NE70 7QD**

I want to thank all of you for the extremely friendly welcome that you gave the inspectors when we visited your school. We really enjoyed our time talking to you all.

I was impressed by your excellent behaviour and your keenness to learn. The school provides a good quality of education because you have capable class teachers and support staff. You can be proud of your good progress and achievement. Staff care for you very well and this enables pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to make excellent progress. You clearly feel safe and enjoy very friendly relationships with your staff. You know how to stay safe and healthy and really enjoy the opportunities to join in school and village events. Your new headteacher and staff know exactly what to do to make your school even better.

It was obvious from your comments that you enjoy your thought-provoking and interesting lessons. Some excellent use is made of the many links your school has with the local village, support agencies and the local network of schools and nursery. Your parents and carers told me just how highly they value the enjoyment you get from school and the commitment and hard work of your staff.

I have asked senior leaders to look at ways of improving your skills. Reception children enjoy many interesting activities provided for them. I have asked their teachers to help them to find more things out for themselves when they learn outside. This will help them make even faster progress as they grow and develop. We have also asked that the school improve the way in which they check your progress, consider how well new classroom activities are working and make certain you know what to do to improve your work.

You can play your part by continuing to work as hard as you can. Thank you for helping with this inspection. I hope your school will continue to improve.

I wish you all a bright future.

Yours sincerely

Mr Clive Petts  
Lead inspector

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