

Otterburn First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122215
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	359188
Inspection dates	25–26 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Margaret Farrow HMI

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	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	51
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Elaine Hunter
Headteacher	Mr Geoff Raffle
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Otterburn Newcastle-upon-Tyne Tyne and Wear NE19 1JF
Telephone number	01830 520283
Fax number	0
Email address	Anne.Corbett@northumberland.gov.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
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M2 7LA

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector who was present for the first morning of the inspection to support evaluation of the school's safeguarding arrangements. Nine lessons were observed and all four teachers seen; this includes the school's current supply teacher and the headteacher. Meetings were held with pupils and staff and a telephone discussion took place with the Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a selection of documentation including the school's safeguarding and health and safety policies, the school development plan and assessment information regarding the current standards and progress of pupils across the school. Questionnaires from 32 parents and carers, 8 staff and 22 pupils were also analysed.

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

- The extent to which all pupils make good progress in their learning.
- The impact of the school's work on pupils, and their safety, enjoyment and attendance.
- The effectiveness of leadership and management beyond the headteacher, including how effectively the governing body carry out their statutory duties with regard to safeguarding pupils.

Information about the school

Otterburn is a much smaller-than-average school. It serves the very small rural village of the same name and isolated hamlets and farming communities across a wide area of Northumberland. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage and although remaining well below average, the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic heritage is increasing. A below average proportion of pupils is known to be entitled to free school meals. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is also below average; currently none of these pupils has a statement of special educational needs. The number of pupils in each year group is small. With the exception of Reception aged children, pupils are educated in mixed year-groups: Years' 1 and 2 and, Years' 3 and 4. The number of pupils assessed at the end of Key Stage 1 is very low, often below 10. Because of the size of the school, the headteacher has a teaching role for 60% of the time.

At the time of the last inspection in December 2009, the school was given a notice to improve because of weaknesses in the management of the school's safeguarding procedures. In April 2010 the school received a monitoring visit from one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and was judged to be making good progress in tackling those weaknesses. A new Chair of Governors was appointed following the last inspection.

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

In accordance with Section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. School leaders including the governing body, took decisive action to tackle the weaknesses in safeguarding procedures identified at the time of the last inspection and they now meet statutory requirements. Leaders have continued to build on the good elements present in December 2009. Improvements to safeguarding procedures have had a positive impact on the care, guidance and support provided to pupils and these aspects of the school's work are outstanding.

One parent summed up the views of a number when she wrote in the inspection questionnaire, 'A great school; community spirited with very helpful teachers who always put the children first.' Indeed, 'community', 'harmony' and 'great team work' are words that sum up Otterburn school, between staff, the governing body and pupils. Very good relationships permeate the school. All pupils are known exceptionally well and every effort is made to ensure they make the most of their time here. The school proactively tackles discrimination of any kind and promotes equality of opportunity well. Consequently, all pupils thrive in this nurturing community. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding, in lessons, as they move around school and when enjoying the range of interesting facilities in the school grounds. They are polite, friendly and supportive of one another. It was a privilege to see how sensitively pupils in Year 3 and Year 4 welcomed a 'new starter' into their class on the first day of the inspection.

Good quality teaching, an improving focus on the use of individual pupil assessments and an increasingly interesting curriculum are ensuring year-on-year improvement in the attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 1. In 2010, attainment was above average, particularly the proportion of pupils attaining higher levels in reading and mathematics. This represents good progress, given pupils broadly average starting points on entry into Reception class. Pupils continue to make good progress during their final two years in school and are well-prepared for their move to middle school. The special educational needs coordinator's careful identification of pupils learning needs, high-quality targeted interventions, including one-to-one support where needed, and use of the well-deployed, skilled higher-level teaching assistant, are making sure that pupils' special educational needs are well met. As a result, such pupils also make good progress in their learning. Although the regular use of pupil assessment information is improving, it is not always used successfully to make sure all lessons take account of pupils' individual starting points. This means that some pupils start work that is a little too easy for them and while they do make good progress, this limits their opportunities to make outstanding progress. Pupils' work is marked regularly but it does not always inform pupils of what they need to do next to achieve their challenging targets.

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The headteacher has successfully shared his vision for pupils to be happy, achieve their best and be well-prepared to succeed in their future lives. Staff and the improved governing body work successfully together towards this endeavour. They share a strong sense of commitment to the school and a re-invigorated determination to be outstanding in all aspects of their work. They are all involved in the development of the school's accurate evaluation of its work and have a clear understanding of what is working well and what could be better. Identified areas for improvement have been translated into a succinct development plan which is monitored regularly by staff and the governing body. Given improvements, since the last inspection, the good attainment and progress of pupils, and the determined ambition of all, the school has good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In order to ensure all pupils make the fastest possible progress in lessons:
 - ensure the assessment information teachers hold about pupils' current abilities is always used to inform planning and learning in lessons
 - ensure consistency in the quality of informative marking across the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The good attitudes to learning acquired during children's time in Reception class continue to be developed during Key Stage 1 and into Key Stage 2. Inspection evidence and the school's assessment data show that pupils attain well and make good and occasionally outstanding progress in their lessons. The progress of all groups of pupils is good; with boys enjoying literacy lessons as much as girls because the work set captures their interest well, for example, when planning exciting fairy stories with characters such as goblins, dragons or fairy princesses.

Pupils say they enjoy school. This is reflected in their above-average attendance, which has improved significantly over the last two years. They confidently assert they feel safe and this is also evidenced in responses to the pupil inspection questionnaire and in the school's own recent survey of their views. Pupils say because Otterburn is a small school, everyone knows and looks after each other very well. They are adamant that incidents of bullying are very rare; indeed they could not recall any recent incidents and are confident that any concerns they may have will be quickly tackled by adults in school. Pupils understand clearly how to maintain a healthy life style and a much higher than average proportion eats the healthy school meals provided. The wide range of physical play equipment at break times, daily activity lessons and the regular supervised walking and cycling routes from the village add to their good physical development and their enjoyment. Pupils make a good contribution to the work of the school through their many formal and informal roles and responsibilities, for example, in the way that older pupils look after the younger ones and help them with their reading. The school council makes sure views of their peers are heard and responded to. A recent example is procurement of high-quality goal posts to replace the cumbersome tyres that stood as a poor substitute. Pupils grow into confident, articulate and willing young people during their time in school. These qualities alongside their good literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills, good team-working and the school's good support

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for pupils' transitions into middle school, ensure they are well-prepared for their next steps.

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?

Teaching is good and occasionally outstanding. This, together with the very good relationships between teachers and pupils, successfully promotes pupils' positive attitudes to learning and supports the good progress they make in lessons. Pupils work equally well in groups, in pairs or independently from their earliest years in school. Teachers mostly use current assessment of pupils' progress to match tasks to the wide range of ages and abilities in each class. However, progress is not outstanding because in some lessons teachers do not make sure this information is used to pitch learning precisely enough to their current levels of understanding, limiting opportunities for pupils to always make the fastest progress possible. Staff work together effectively to make sure all aspects of the National Curriculum are included in their cross-curricular topic work. These themes provide opportunities that stimulate pupils and sustain their interest and enjoyment. Successful efforts are made to overcome the small numbers of staff and isolated location. These include the enrichment of the curriculum and pupils' experiences through an array of visitors to school and experiences out of school. The curriculum is enriched further through exciting opportunities in the diverse school grounds like the 'summer forest school' and physical exercise challenges. These activities take advantage of sports

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specialists from the local middle school or the Mighty Mercs and fully exploit the diverse school grounds. The well-being of every pupil is paramount and the school rightly prides itself on the high-quality care, guidance and support provided. Great care is taken to ensure that pupils are given robust guidance on how to stay safe, including when using the Internet. The school successfully secures support from other agencies when necessary, to make certain the needs of the few pupils who may face temporary, or other challenges in their lives are well-met.

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 leadership and management of teaching and learning are improving through the involvement of all staff in reviewing its quality. This is ensuring more sharing of good practice and helpfully highlighting things that could be even better. The governing body has undergone significant change in personnel since the last inspection and has improved rapidly. It now carries out its statutory duties effectively. Weaknesses in safeguarding procedures have been tackled and meet requirements. Every possible action is taken to make sure children are safe in school and on visits out of school. Partnerships with agencies such as police, fire and rescue service successfully promote pupils' good understanding of safety within their local community. The governing body is now fully involved in the scrutiny of the school's work and provides a good balance of challenge and support to the headteacher. Staff recognise improvements made, and in their questionnaire responses all strongly agreed the governing body do an effective job. Partnership with parents and carers is good. Communications are regular, including communication about actions taken to tackle the few things they feel the school could do better following the recent parent and carer survey. The school's promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. Effective actions are taken to develop pupils' understanding of, and involvement in, the local community and in the more diverse communities in Northumberland through partnership with a small school on the coast. Their work on the ABC of Redesdale provided pupils with a good understanding of their place in their own unique region. Children's understanding of the diversity of communities globally is developing through the curriculum and assemblies as well as theme-days such as world food day, and the school has clear plans to widen pupils' understanding further.

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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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children are provided with a wide range of interesting activities and stimulating experiences both indoors and out and are successfully encouraged to make decisions and take responsibility for their learning. Such strategies, alongside regular assessments of their achievements, makes sure children attain well and make good progress from their broadly average starting points. Children feel safe, form good relationships with each other and with adults and engage well in their learning. They behave very well and enthusiastically take part in individual or collaborative play, developing a good understanding of sharing and taking turns. Children's enjoyment is evident for all to see and they become confident and articulate young people during their time in the setting. Teaching is good and assessment information and children's views are used well to plan activities across all areas of learning. Consequently, the curriculum provides a good balance between focused teacher-led activities and those which children choose for themselves. Partnerships and communications with parents and carers are good as evidenced in inspection questionnaires and the school's own survey of their views. Regular meetings and discussions ensure parents and carers keep up to date with their children's progress as well as celebrating their achievements. Learning journeys, to which parents contribute, provide a shared understanding of key achievements both at home and at school. Transitions into Reception are very good. The privately-run pre-school takes place on the school site three times a week and children get to know staff and other children very well before they join school. Since the last inspection robust action has been taken to ensure the welfare requirements are well-met.

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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

Out of the 39 parents and carers with children in school, 32 responded to the inspection questionnaire. This is a much higher than average proportion. Virtually all of them agree or strongly agree that the school is doing a good job in the education and care of their children. The report above indicates inspection judgements endorse these views. A few made additional comments and all of these were positive. One made a negative comment but this was to express concerns about the relevance in the wording to some of the questions in the questionnaire and limitation in flexibility for some answers.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Otterburn 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 32 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 51 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	22	65	12	35	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	21	62	11	32	1	3	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	18	53	16	47	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	15	44	19	56	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	19	56	15	44	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	16	47	18	53	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	19	56	14	41	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)	16	47	15	44	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	17	50	17	50	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	17	50	16	47	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	15	44	19	56	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	19	56	14	41	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	22	65	11	32	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.



27 January 2011

Dear pupils

Inspection of Otterburn First School, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE19 1JF

Thank you for making me so welcome when I came to inspect your school. Those who spoke to me and inspection questionnaire responses from some of you and your parents and carers, are very positive about the quality of education you receive. Like you, I have judged Otterburn to be a good school with outstanding features in the care, guidance and support provided to you all. Your behaviour is also outstanding. You are polite, friendly and caring of one another and thrive in this caring and inclusive school. I was impressed with the way you welcomed your 'new starter' on the first day of the inspection. Because of good teaching, an interesting curriculum and your improving attendance, you make good progress in your learning and you are well-prepared for middle school when the time comes to leave Otterburn. The headteacher, staff and governing body have worked hard to improve the things identified as weaknesses at the time of the last inspection successfully, as well as making sure the good things about the school continue to be good or improve further. Weaknesses in the policies to make sure you are safe have been tackled and those of you and virtually all your parents, carers and staff who responded to the inspection questionnaires believe you are safe in school.

Because Otterburn is a good school there are few areas that need improvement but I have asked the school to improve two things. Although you make good progress, some of you could make even better progress so I have asked that teachers make sure the information they have about your progress is always used to challenge you further in lessons. I have also asked them to make sure that marking always lets you know how well you are doing and what you need to do next to achieve your targets.

I am glad to hear that you enjoy school and hope you continue to do so. Thank you once again for being so welcoming. I wish you all the best and hope you continue to make the best of your time in this happy, caring school.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Margaret Farrow

Her Majesty's Inspector

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