

Simonside Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108454
Local Authority	Newcastle Upon Tyne
Inspection number	356365
Inspection dates	11–12 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Graeme Clarke

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	187
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Neil Pont
Headteacher	Miss Jane Sutton
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed the work of eight teachers during short visits to parts of lessons and extended visits to eight lessons and joined two assemblies. They examined a variety of pupils' written work. Inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body, teachers and a group of pupils. They scrutinised the school's child protection and safeguarding documentation, information about the curriculum, development plans, records of pupils' progress and minutes of the governing body meetings. They analysed 74 questionnaires from parents and carers, 90 from pupils in Key Stage 2 and five from members of staff.

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

- Attainment in mathematics.
- The progress made by higher attaining pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Arrangements to improve attendance and the effect of absence on pupils' achievement and the development of skills that will contribute to their economic well-being.
- How effectively new curricular arrangements foster good progress and achievement.
- How effectively the school now fosters community cohesion.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. A high proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. A well above average proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities and the number with a statement of special educational needs is above average. Almost all pupils are White British and others have an African, Asian or Chinese heritage. A very small number are learning English as an additional language. The school is presently led by an acting headteacher during the absence of the headteacher from January 2011 for maternity leave. The school has gained Healthy School status and the Basic Skills, Eco-school and Enviro-school awards.

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

Simonside Primary School provides its pupils with a good education. All adults work with a common purpose to assure the welfare of pupils and to promote good learning throughout the school. The exceptionally effective Early Years Foundation Stage gives children an excellent start to their education. Children join the Nursery class with abilities well below those expected for their age and make outstanding progress in this key stage. Pupils' attainment is average at the end of Year 6 but is slightly higher in English than in mathematics. Pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are effectively helped to do their best. From their starting points, pupils make good progress by the time they leave Year 6.

Pupils value their friendships strongly. They behave well in lessons and are safe and considerate in and out-of-doors. They talk informatively about diet, enjoy exercise and can give good clear advice on safe use of the internet. Pupils happily take responsibility within the school and make a good contribution to school life and the local community. Good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development stems from many opportunities pupils have for reflection, to consider the rights and views of others, to work together and to find out about their own and other people's cultural heritage.

In the good quality lessons, teachers and teaching assistants engage pupils' interest and successfully encourage them to contribute. Marking of pupils' work is not always consistent, however, because of missed opportunities to help pupils improve to the next level, particularly in mathematics. The curriculum is planned effectively to improve pupils' basic skills, particularly in English through work in many subjects, although not enough attention is given to widening their application of their mathematics skills. Productive partnerships enrich pupils' experience and foster community cohesion well. Good quality care, guidance and support give extra help to pupils when needed. However, despite strenuous efforts by the school, including building fruitful partnerships with parents and carers, attendance is lower than average.

School leaders and the governing body accurately evaluate their work and provide a constant agenda for improvement. They quickly addressed the issues raised at the last inspection and have sustained pupils' good progress. Development planning is effective and focuses on raising attainment and improving the quality of teaching. However, the expected effect of planned activities on pupils' outcomes is not always fully clear to help the governing body and senior leaders accurately review progress. Nevertheless, improvements since the last inspection, diligent management and a systematic approach ensure that capacity for further improvement is good.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment throughout the school, particularly in mathematics by:
 - consolidating initiatives to improve the teaching of mathematics and widening the opportunities pupils have to experience and practise skills in mathematics throughout other subjects of the curriculum
 - improving the quality of marking so it is consistently rigorous and includes clear pointers for improvement to help pupils move on to the next level
 - analysing pupils' errors in mathematics and giving specific help to put them right
 - consolidating existing arrangements and enhancing partnerships with parents and carers in order to reduce persistent absenteeism and to improve attendance.
- Enhance the value of development planning by ensuring that those actions taken to improve progress are clear and sharply focused.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils take part enthusiastically in lessons where they are keen to answer questions and often give clear explanations of their thinking. They quickly become involved in lesson activities where they work responsibly on their own, in small groups or within the whole class. They develop confidence with speaking and handle discussions with classmates well. They all take care to present their written and mathematical work neatly and handwriting is clear and legible. Pupils enjoy school and achieve well.

Pupils make good progress overall from their starting points. Children join the Nursery class with abilities that are much lower than those expected for their age, particularly in aspects of their personal development and in their language skills. While they now enter Year 1 with expected skills overall, in previous years children entered Year 1 with skills that were below expectations. Pupils' overall good progress enables them to leave Year 6 with average attainment overall, but attainment in mathematics is not as high as in English. Since the last inspection attainment has risen in both subjects. Boys and girls make equally good progress. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those of higher ability also make good progress. The majority of pupils currently in Year 6 are making good progress in mathematics, and are doing particularly well in writing.

Pupils feel safe in school and are in no doubt why procedures for safe conduct and use of the internet should be followed. They are polite and courteous but very occasionally talk out of turn. Voluntary physical activities after school are popular and pupils clearly know about the importance of diet, hygiene and exercise for health. Pupils help make an admirable contribution to their school, for example, through their effective school council and as playground buddies and in helping improve the school environment. They also make a good contribution to the lives of others in their locality, through visits to a local church and care home, and by working to improve the environment. Attendance is improving rapidly but remains below average because of the adverse effects of persistent absenteeism amongst a very small number of pupils. Nevertheless, pupils' average basic skills, their awareness of business and experience of enterprise activities soundly pave the way for the next steps in their education.

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

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	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	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
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	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	4
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?

Pupils learn well and make good progress as a result of good teaching. The implementation of different programmes and initiatives, such as to improve pupils' writing skills has improved the quality of teaching and learning particularly in English. An effective combination of clear learning intentions shared with pupils, well-planned activities that capture pupils' interest, lively challenging questioning and opportunities taken to reinforce learning lie at the heart of teaching at its best. In such lessons, teachers encourage pupils to be actively involved and in turn they work with commendable endeavour. Recently, modelled teaching of this kind has been used to develop the expertise of less-experienced teachers. Adept, well-coordinated support from teaching assistants notably helps pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. Pupils have targets set in writing and mathematics, but they are not clearly set out in relation to the next level of attainment they should reach. Marking is more helpful in English, although even here the advice given is not precise in relation to what is needed to reach the next level. When teachers mark pupils' work in mathematics, errors are not clearly analysed nor are pupils shown how to correct them. These weaker aspects of teaching place restrictions on raising pupils' attainment.

Strengths in the curriculum lie in the many activities that broaden pupils' experience in subjects and in all aspects of their personal development. Diligently planned themes in history, geography and science link subjects effectively to promote attainment in reading

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and writing particularly, but less so in mathematics. Visitors and visits, in partnership with local heritage and faith centres, together with popular after-school activities, expand pupils' cultural and sporting awareness. Gifted and talented pupils benefit from specific activities jointly held with other schools. Opportunities to take part in visits, for example, to local businesses and enterprise activities substantially contribute in developing pupils' social skills and awareness of the world of work.

In this caring and welcoming school, considerate relationships and diligently followed safeguarding arrangements assure the welfare of all pupils. The careful analysis of pupils' performance enables the identification of well-focused support for those at risk of underachievement. Skilful teaching assistants make a key contribution in supporting pupils and lead in turn to pupils' good progress. In partnership with the local authority, adroit management of the emotional and behavioural difficulties of some vulnerable pupils leads to them taking a full part in school-life. Good arrangements successfully prepare pupils for moving from one part of the school to the next and then on to secondary education. Good, effective procedures now firmly established have markedly improved attendance. The school is continuing to work with a small number of families who are in challenging circumstances in order to reduce persistent absenteeism further.

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?

Senior leaders are committed to improving pupils' progress and attainment by promoting more effective teaching. Building upon a strong legacy, staff willingly work well together as a coherent team under the guidance of their acting headteacher. Initiatives, for example, to make writing more appealing to boys and to raise attainment are bearing fruit. The recently reconstituted governing body is developing its role and expertise well, for example, to gather first-hand experience of the school's work. The governing body knows its next steps are to become more proactive in evaluation and strategic planning. Planning for school improvement flows from accurate self-evaluation and sets the appropriate priorities for attention. However, suggested activities are often imprecise and criteria for success are not focused sharply enough on expected impact in order to help the governing body and senior leaders evaluate their effect. Nevertheless, following clear leadership, teachers now analyse and use information about pupils' performance to plan and evaluate support for those needing particular help. Effective partnerships with local agencies and organisations enhance the quality of education and widen pupils' horizons. The school reaches out to parents and carers through different media and meetings. The coffee morning initiative that brings teachers, pupils and parents and carers together from each year group each term is particularly valued. The school ensures that discrimination is

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avoided and that equality of opportunity is good. Vulnerable pupils, including those from overseas or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities participate fully in all the school offers. The gap between boys' and girls' progress has closed and more-able pupils reach their potential. Following a thorough analysis, the governing body has assured a good contribution to community cohesion, by involving pupils in local activities and by extending their awareness of life in the United Kingdom and overseas. Measures for safeguarding the welfare of pupils fully meet current guidelines and, through the curriculum, successfully encourage pupils to conduct themselves safely. There are rigorous procedures for vetting all adults who work regularly with the children.

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	3
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

Most children leave the Reception class having made outstanding progress in their personal and social development, in physical development, in acquiring knowledge and understanding of the world and in some aspects of literacy and mathematics. Attainment is close to the national expectation. Although a majority make good or outstanding progress in developing reading, writing and calculating skills, attainment for more children in these areas than in other aspects of learning is below that expected for their age. Children follow routines well, thoroughly enjoy learning, and are able to play and learn well together or independently. Staff look after children's welfare, for example, making sure they are wrapped up to keep warm when making excellent use of outdoor facilities. Children become engrossed in activities and show notable perseverance as they follow their interests or contribute in directed learning with adults. They form good relationships with other children and adults and in turn know to ask for help if they have any concerns.

Skilled staff make very effective use of the indoor and extensive outdoor facilities to provide a supportive environment in which children feel safe and develop confidence. A

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good, carefully planned, balance of well-arranged activities in all areas of learning stimulates children's imagination and enjoyment. Children learn in a carefully managed way that blends adult support with activities that they choose for themselves. Their 'travel agency' was an inspired way to promote collaborative learning about transport in many areas. By aligning phonics activities closely to children's capabilities, adults foster children's knowledge of letters and sounds exceptionally well.

In this outstandingly well led and managed stage of children's education all staff work and plan effectively together as a coherent team. Significant changes have been made since the last inspection and this has led to improvements in children's progress and attainment by the time they enter Year 1. Highly effective assessment procedures enable a careful match of activities and expectations to children's particular needs and are used very diligently on a day-to-day basis to tailor activities and learning to suit individual children. Key workers have a very detailed knowledge of children's progress and interests and help them to develop further. Together these arrangements lead to the outstanding progress children make throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage. Meticulously compiled learning journals record children's progress and are effectively used to inform parents and carers and to engage them in supporting their children's learning. Parents and carers express a high degree of satisfaction about their knowledge of their child's progress and the school's welfare arrangements.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers responding to the questionnaire have a very positive view of the school, for example, by indicating their complete satisfaction that the school keeps their child safe, that their children are well taught and supported and that they are well informed about their child's progress. Almost all are, in turn, happy with their child's experience. A few parents and carers wrote comments to voice both their praise for the school or to express personal concerns about support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and about misbehaviour. Inspectors followed up these concerns. Inspectors found that the school carefully identifies and supports pupils having difficulty with learning and that teachers effectively manage the difficult behaviour exhibited by a very small number of pupils and ensure it does not affect the progress of others.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

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

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

The inspection team received 74 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 187 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	31	42	38	51	5	7	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	37	50	34	46	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	37	50	37	50	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	34	46	32	43	6	8	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	43	58	31	42	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	31	42	38	51	3	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	32	43	36	49	1	1	2	3
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	36	37	50	5	7	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	30	41	35	47	3	4	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	24	32	34	46	9	12	5	7
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	26	35	42	57	5	7	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	30	41	40	54	3	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	36	49	35	47	1	1	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.



13 January 2011

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Simonside Primary School, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE5 4LG

Thank you for your welcome when my colleagues and I visited to inspect your school. We did enjoy talking with those of you whom we met. We were impressed by how polite you are. When we visited lessons and assemblies we were delighted to see how much you like to take part and that many of you were well behaved. A few of you can help everyone learn by always being good listeners and not talking out of turn. We were pleased to see how you contribute to school life and to your local area, for example, as school councillors and in other ways that you help others.

I am pleased to report that your school gives you a good education. Children in the Nursery and Reception classes learn exceptionally well in this outstanding stage in their education. All the adults in the school look after you well and keep you safe. You make good progress through the school. Your teachers have helped you to improve your writing and in turn, results in English have improved in recent years and are similar to the national averages. However, your attainment in mathematics is not quite as high as in English. Therefore, we have asked the school to help more of you to do better in mathematics.

When we looked at your books we liked the way your teachers let you know how well you are doing. When they mark all of your written work we have asked them always to let you know the level of work they expect you to reach, and let you know the next steps you should take to make improvements. We have also asked your headteacher and the governing body to plan carefully to help you improve so that they can be very precise when they check how well you are doing. Lastly, we have asked that the school is even more successful in making sure that all of you attend regularly. Those of you who do not should make a special effort to come to school much more often. You have many opportunities at Simonside Primary School to learn about life and these help you to prepare for the future. We hope that you all do really well.

Yours sincerely

Mr Graeme Clarke

Lead inspector

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