

North Park Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132172
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	360385
Inspection dates	16–17 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Clive Petts

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	214
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Clr Neil Foster
Headteacher	Mrs Patricia Monk
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors visited 14 lessons and observed nine class teachers. They held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. They analysed 60 questionnaire responses from parents and carers, and looked at questionnaires from staff and pupils. The inspectors also looked at: the school's development priorities; pupils' progress and achievement data; documents relating to the safeguarding of pupils; school policies; and plans for improving the quality of learning. They scrutinised pupils' current and past work and spoke to the local authority's improvement partner to discuss his reports.

The inspectors reviewed many aspects of the school's work and looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The quality of learning and the rates of progress made by all groups of pupils, especially the more able and talented.
- The quality of teaching across the school and its effectiveness in raising achievement and accelerating pupils' progress.
- The effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage in promoting good learning and development.
- The action of senior leaders to improve the quality of provision and secure sustained improvement in the outcomes for pupils.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized primary school situated close to the town centre. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The school is part of a national pilot scheme which enables all pupils to access a free school meal. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average, with just under twice the average number having a statement of special educational need. The school has gained the Artsmark Gold, International School and UNICEF Rights Respecting awards. The headteacher took up her role in January 2011, having previously undertaken the role of acting headteacher from November 2010.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

North Park is a satisfactory school. It is rapidly improving because the headteacher has very quickly established an ambition of high expectations. Both the governing body and the staff share this ambition. Consequently, there is now a strong emphasis on getting the best out of pupils, which in turn is accelerating their rates of progress. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive in their support. One parent's comment summed up the views of many: 'My child absolutely loves the school, her friends, teachers, class-work, school meals and all activities offered.' They especially appreciate the excellent communications between school and home.

Some outcomes for pupils are strong. Good care, guidance and support prepare pupils well for life in a diverse world. Pupils know well how to stay safe and healthy. Their behaviour is good because the school sets clear boundaries and expects the pupils to reflect on their actions. They contribute well to the school and local communities and have a good understanding of communities further afield.

Most children enter Nursery with skills below the levels expected for their age. Children settle very quickly and happily and make satisfactory progress overall by the end of Reception. Staff make everyday observations of the children's development, but these assessments lack rigour and are not used sufficiently to inform self-evaluation, guide planning and extend learning. Throughout the school pupils' progress is satisfactory with clear indications that this is becoming stronger very quickly as a result of intensive improvements to teaching. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. This is because their classroom support is well-targeted and effective.

The actions taken by the school to boost progress and achievement are effective. A great deal has been done to enhance teaching which, although satisfactory overall, is improving significantly. For example, teachers' expectations are higher and more focused on challenging pupils' thinking although not all use more imaginative ways to encourage pupils to explain and justify their thinking. Assessment is used more effectively, but the lower levels of challenge in some lessons are the result of inconsistent use of assessment information in planning and the variable quality of marking. Opportunities are sometimes missed to enable pupils to apply and practise basic skills, especially when solving mathematical problems.

Safeguarding is good. The strong sense of purpose, clear vision and accurate self-evaluation of the headteacher underpins school improvements. She has swiftly and effectively bolstered the quality of learning. The governing body provides much support and expertise; the impact of their monitoring is becoming stronger. Rigorous checking of pupils' development by staff is now in place and outcomes analysed to inform planning. The positive engagement of parents and carers, good quality care and the effective use of support and specialist services are helping to sustain improvements, such as keeping

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attendance above average, and drastically reducing exclusions. Accordingly, there is a satisfactory and growing capacity to continue to improve.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the rates of progress and improve achievement further by ensuring that:
 - – all activities are engaging and challenging and allow pupils to apply their skills to solve problems, especially in mathematics
 - – pupils' thinking is consistently questioned to justify their ideas and opinions and explain their solutions.
- Raise the overall quality of teaching to at least good by:
 - – making certain that sufficient challenge is applied to inspire and excite pupils
 - – ensuring assessment information is used consistently to detail how pupils can improve their work
 - – extending the opportunities to practise their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum.
- Increase the effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - – ensuring that accurate assessments are embedded in high quality, focused observations
 - – making certain that assessment information is always used to guide activity planning
 - – ensuring rigorous self-evaluation supports continuous improvement.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils' progress, achievement and enjoyment are satisfactory. Those with special educational needs and/disabilities make good progress from their starting points. Current school information, confirmed by inspection evidence, reveals early signs that pupils are now making better progress across all abilities and needs, and most Year 6 pupils are on track to reach at least average attainment. More pupils are also on course to reach the higher levels in line with national averages. This is a result of the increasing demands in their learning, which ensures pupils' interest is captured and is more engaged throughout the lesson. Nevertheless, although pupils are now achieving and enjoying better, acceleration to rates of progress is very recent and still varies across classes; so progress is satisfactory overall. In some lessons, pupils do not apply their skills and justify their answers and solutions sufficiently, especially when problem-solving in mathematics. As a consequence, their thinking skills are less systematically developed.

The UNICEF Rights Respecting initiative spreads through all aspects of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and is evident in their good relationships with each other and their staff. Pupils are considerate and helpful. They display a good awareness of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle, taking their diet choices and keeping fit seriously. They take pride in their decision-making role helping the school to improve. Pupils report that

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bullying is rare and the sharp fall in exclusions demonstrates their responsible attitudes and tolerant behaviour. Older pupils display mature attitudes when acting as buddies, adding to the positive, friendly and helpful atmosphere.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
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	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?

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, but improving quickly as staff skills and talents are carefully nurtured and developed. When approaches are more imaginative, and the learning is more active and demanding, pupils become absorbed in their work, such as when writing a wanted poster for 'Alex T Wolf'. Probing, open-ended questions are used to check pupils' thinking and understanding, adding to the momentum of accelerating progress. More activities are now better matched to individual needs and present greater challenge, often in more imaginative ways. When activities are more mundane and do not present sufficient challenge to pupils' thinking, progress slows down. The increasing use of assessment to personalise all learning is adding to the good quality of intervention and support for pupils of all needs and backgrounds.

The satisfactory curriculum is progressively a better match to pupils' interests, needs and abilities. Developing use of themes is linking subjects together in more interesting ways, adding to pupils' enjoyment. However, there are not enough planned opportunities to use their full range of skills across the curriculum, for example using modern technology in the classroom. There is good provision for personal development, which develops their

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experiences and skills well, such as when on a residential visit in Teesdale. Links with a partner school in France give pupils an insight into how beliefs and cultures in the world can differ from their own.

The good care, guidance and support which pupils receive are strengths of the school. Staff can point to real successes in helping pupils overcome difficulties and challenging events in their lives to once more enjoy learning and make good progress. Parents and carers appreciate the time that staff make available to discuss any issues of concern. The good links with support agencies make a valuable contribution in the positive engagement of families in challenging circumstances. This is helping them to re-engage them with education, for example by significantly reducing the level of persistent absence.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The passion and drive of the headteacher, ably supported by the governing body, is evident in her resolve to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Staff share the same ambitions and are well motivated to expect more of pupils and bring about sustained improvements. Their confidence and skills are growing and this can be seen in their willingness to take risks, for example by using more imaginative approaches to inspire and excite pupils' learning. Variations in the pattern of progress and achievement are being successfully addressed, although the full impact in measurable outcomes has yet to be seen. Rigorous analysis of the outcomes for pupils is now in place and informing school improvement planning effectively. Relationships with parents and carers are good and they are progressively more involved in their children's development. The governing body is increasingly proactive, playing a fuller role in the shaping of the school's strategic direction. Good partnerships with local schools, colleges, the local church and local authority specialists help to enrich learning.

The school adopts good procedures and practice for safeguarding which meet requirements. All staff are suitably trained. They utilise best practice to help keep pupils safe and be safety-conscious. The happy, friendly atmosphere and the strong sense of belonging, ensure that all pupils are equally involved in all activities that the school has to offer. The accelerating progress demonstrates the school's commitment to tackle discrimination and ensure that all achieve equally well. Community cohesion is promoted well and the range of experiences provided broaden pupils' understanding of the diversity that exists in the world.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
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	3
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	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

A large majority of children enter Nursery with skills below those typical for their age, with speech and language a particular concern. Occasionally, some children are not as ready as might be for classroom routines, such as sharing, taking turns and playing independently. By the time they enter Year 1, most children are still working towards the goals expected of them. This represents satisfactory progress overall. In some areas of development, children make good progress, settling into routines in the happy, friendly atmosphere. This is because staff place a firm emphasis on developing early confidence and independence. Welfare requirements are exceeded, ensuring that children are well looked-after.

Children relate well to adults and are happy to find things out for themselves, both indoors and outdoors. Adult questioning often prompts their thinking well to add to their knowledge, such as when on a mini-beast hunt, but demands made are not always challenging enough. Initial sounds and letter recognition are well practised, especially in Nursery, but opportunities to reinforce them are not consistently embedded in all activities. Adults regularly observe children's learning but these are not systematically and concisely recorded. As a consequence, assessments of children's development sometimes lack the rigour and accuracy necessary to ensure needs and abilities are quickly and precisely identified. Children's learning journals include some positive evidence of their development, but not all opportunities are taken to include regular contributions from parents and carers. Leadership and management are satisfactory and improving as expectations of what children can achieve are raised.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

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

Views of parents and carers

About one quarter of all parents and carers returned the questionnaire with their views of the school. This is a little below the national average level of returns for primary schools. The views expressed were overwhelmingly positive about the quality of what the school provides and all indicated that their children are kept safe. Parents and carers are extremely appreciative of the school's friendly, welcoming atmosphere, the effective methods of keeping them informed and of the good quality care and support their children receive. The inspection findings were in line with these views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at North Park 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 60 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 214 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	37	62	21	35	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	35	58	25	42	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	27	45	32	53	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	29	48	29	48	2	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	32	53	28	47	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	27	45	30	50	3	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	27	45	30	50	2	3	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)	23	38	34	57	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	30	50	29	48	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	27	45	30	50	3	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	27	45	29	48	3	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	30	50	29	48	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	30	50	28	47	2	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	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.



18 February 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of North Park Primary School, Spennymoor, DL16 6PP

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

North Park is a satisfactory and rapidly improving school, which has a number of strengths. We were pleased by your sensible and responsible behaviour and the good care taken of you. You obviously feel safe and happy because of this. You understand well the benefits of a healthy lifestyle can bring. You take much pride helping the school to improve and enthusiastically join in all school activities. Some of you told us that your teachers make much of your learning fun. Your school is taking very positive action to improve and this can be seen in your faster progress and improving skills.

We have asked your headteacher, staff and the governing body to look at more ways of helping you to improve your work and make even faster progress. We want all your teachers to make your work more demanding and use their knowledge of your progress to plan your work and help you improve. For example, we have asked them to make sure that you use your mathematical skills more frequently. We have also asked that your lessons are made even more interesting, which will help you to achieve more. We have asked senior leaders to make certain that younger children are assessed more accurately as they learn and develop. They can then use this information to judge how well children are doing and plan improvements to their activities provided indoors and outdoors.

You can play your part by working as hard as you can. Thank you for helping with this inspection.

Best wishes for your future.

Yours sincerely

Clive Petts

Lead inspector

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