

Easington Lane Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108795
Local Authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	356427
Inspection dates	30–31 March 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	240
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Christopher Tate
Headteacher	Mrs Sarah Nordstrom
Date of previous school inspection	23 May 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 13 lessons and observed 12 class teachers. They held meetings with the governing body, staff and groups of pupils, analysed 86 questionnaire responses from parents and carers and looked at questionnaires from 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. They scrutinised pupils' current and past work and spoke to the School Improvement Partner.

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

- The quality of teaching and learning across the school and its effectiveness in accelerating pupils' progress and raising achievement in literacy, particularly for all groups of pupils in Years 1 to 6.
- The effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage in promoting good learning and development.
- The extent to which leaders and managers are demonstrating the capacity to sustain a consistent pattern of quicker progress and rising achievement and attainment.

Information about the school

Easington Lane is an average sized primary school serving a former mining community to the south-west of Sunderland. Nearly all pupils are of White British heritage, with very few from Irish Traveller families and very few who speak English as an additional language. Well over twice the average number of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. A higher than average proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, with a below average number with a statement of special educational needs. The school has gained the Artsmark, International School and Activemark awards. The school extends its services in that it provides a breakfast club and an after-school club.

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

This is a good and improving school which takes excellent care of its pupils. At the heart of the school's welcoming and inclusive ethos are the passion, drive and vision of the headteacher, who is totally committed to ensuring that all pupils enjoy school and are able to achieve success. This is why those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities or those potentially vulnerable make good progress, because intervention and support is well thought-out and tailored to individual needs. The engagement of parents and carers is outstanding and all are happy with their child's experiences at school. The comments, 'My child has become confident with school work and within themselves' and 'I am comfortable every day that my child's care and needs are being met in every way', sum up their views.

Most pupils enter nursery with skills well below those expected for their age. Though cohorts do vary, a minority typically have weaknesses in their speech and language. At the end of Year 6, attainment is broadly average. Pupils do well in reading and mathematics, but their writing is less good. Although overall progress and achievement from their start points is good for all groups of pupils, rates of progress year to year are sometimes uneven. Concerted action is improving the quality of pupils' extended writing, but it remains variable. For example, in one year group pupils were seen to be quickly absorbed, writing imaginatively and accurately about the lifestyle of a wolf, whilst in another, the group used mundane vocabulary to describe their often lively ideas. Good teaching ensures good achievement and enjoyment, but there are occasions when more could be expected of pupils and opportunities to practise their skills exploited more. There is also scope to match activities even more closely and consistently to their age and ability to help to quicken progress. Marking is positive and helpful, but at times lacks the detailed written guidance for improvement that helps present greater challenge.

The school has successfully tackled the issues raised at the last inspection. The headteacher's aspirations for the school, as a valued community resource, are shared by a committed team of staff. The community café is a 'one stop' advice point for parents and carers, aimed at raising aspirations for those wishing to re-engage with education or work. Self-evaluation judgements are accurate. However, monitoring and evaluation of actions for improvement do not always pinpoint the impact of these actions on the rate of pupils' progress, nor inform future planning consistently enough. The governing body holds the school to account in positive ways and its effective approach to quality assurance, adds much to the outstanding safeguarding of pupils. Good partnerships are enhancing the quality of provision, for example working with architects and specialists from Sheffield University to develop a vibrant outdoor learning area for the youngest children. Together with recent improvements, this demonstrates that the school has a good capacity for further improvement.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the rate and consistency of progress to raise attainment further, particularly in writing, by:
 - making certain all tasks are closely matched to pupils' age, abilities and interests to ensure their skills are fully exploited and consolidated
 - ensuring that teachers' expectations of what all pupils can achieve are raised to increase the demands and challenges in their learning
 - making sure that pupils' extended writing is more imaginative, accurate and descriptive.
- Further improve the quality of teaching, developing the existing good practice by:
 - sharpening approaches to using assessment information to improve the quality of learning and ensuring there is a constant focus on raising achievement in all lessons
 - making sure marking consistently provides well-defined steps for improvement to boost progress and achievement
 - increasing the rigour of monitoring and evaluation to ensure that initiatives adopted to improve provision are having the intended impact in the classroom.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils are keen to learn, listen readily, achieve well and enjoy their lessons. When activities are inspiring and interesting, pupils respond eagerly to the engaging teaching and make consistently good progress. For example, they described in detail a school break-in in their edited version of the Sunderland Mail. They respond well to the opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning. As a result, their skills improve well. When activities do not stretch pupils' thinking sufficiently, progress is a little slower and more uneven. The school's efforts to improve literacy skills is having a positive impact and this can be seen in the emergent writing of younger children, in guided reading and in some of the extended writing of older pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those for whom English is an additional language make good, and in individual cases, outstanding progress, because their needs are identified early and support is carefully adapted to meet their individual abilities and interests.

Pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is apparent in their relationships with adults and each other. They behave well and on occasions exceptionally well, displaying helpful and considerate attitudes. Pupils are aware of the benefits of keeping fit and eating healthily. Members of the school council take their decision-making role seriously, as when promoting active playtimes. Pupils learn to work together well from a young age, listen carefully and respond positively to the good guidance they are given. Pupils have a good understanding of managing money, for example when running their own fruit company. These attributes prepare them well for their future education and for life. Pupils' attendance, although average, is improving.

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

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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
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?

Classrooms are welcoming, friendly places for pupils, which reflect the school's efforts to generate positive attitudes to learning. More imaginative approaches to learning are increasingly thought-provoking, interesting and demanding. In most lessons, teachers provide clear explanations and use up-to-date technology well. Teachers' questioning regularly checks how well pupils have understood what they have learnt and assessment techniques are used well to check pupils' understanding and progress. Action is taken when a pupils' progress slows, although the available progress information is not always used consistently enough by teachers to match activities closely to individual needs and interests.

The good curriculum is being systematically enlivened by using more creative approaches to capture interest and present more stimulating activities to practise skills, for example using the forthcoming Royal Wedding to link subjects together. Pupils learn much from a varied programme of visits and visitors, such as learning about water safety from a lifeguard. Popular residential experiences at an outdoor centre in the Lake District add to their confidence and independence.

Care, support and guidance are good, enabling all pupils to achieve well, including those who face challenging circumstances and those who have pressing needs. The school, working in close collaboration with support agencies, succeeds in providing excellent care for individual pupils, to enable them to achieve well. The emotional health worker and the

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school-based community police officer provide sustained and appropriate support for individuals and their families. Classroom support staff play a visible, pro-active role that enables all pupils to take a full part in school life.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The strengths of leaders and managers lie in their effective team approaches and shared commitment to providing high quality care, raising ambitions and improving the quality of learning. The headteacher provides a firm focus on the robust checking of pupils' progress to inform the school's priority planning. Increasingly, teachers use the information to ensure that lessons are successfully planned to promote faster progress and boost achievement. However, there is scope for adopting sharper approaches to monitoring and evaluation, to ensure that priorities are relentlessly tackled in all lesson activities and progress is faster. The governing body demonstrates a good grasp of school strengths and areas for improvement. They hold the school to account and help shape the strategic direction of the school. The growing confidence and experience of middle managers is also adding to the rigour of self-evaluation.

Outstanding safeguarding practice includes procedures which are very effectively quality assured, in order to keep all pupils safe. The highly positive engagement of parents and carers ensures that they can play a full part in supporting, and making decisions about, their children's development. The 'close-knit' harmonious atmosphere generates a strong sense of belonging for families and reinforces the school's commitment that all pupils should have the same happy experiences. Good local community and school links add to the quality of what the school provides. Through its strengthening partnerships arrangements, such as with schools in Washington State and Tanzania, the school provides pupils with a good and increasing range of experiences of other beliefs and cultures.

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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	1
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	1
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

Children thoroughly enjoy being in Nursery and Reception, because teaching is lively and fun and there is much to capture their curiosity, both indoors and outdoors. A key strength is the ease with which adults communicate and engage children in their learning and play. As a result, there is plenty of action and talk. Activities are imaginatively and thoughtfully planned, to enable children to find things out for themselves and apply their developing skills to thought-provoking experiences; for example, when rehearsing a wedding service for a prince and his bride. Children are confident leading their own learning, for example identifying spring flowers on their outdoor flower hunt. Consequently, from their arrival with skills and experience well below those typical for their age, children make good progress. By the time they enter Year 1, all are working towards the goals expected of them for their age. Imaginative use of new technology, for example using a spy tool to spot the shape of a letter, enables children to link the letter to a sound in exciting ways. This inspires them to practise their sounds, letters and early words and helps accelerate their introduction to reading and writing. Excellent care and support is provided by adults and this is clearly evident in the often exemplary behaviour of children. Welfare requirements are fully met in the extremely safe and secure environments. Parents and carers are provided with a variety of positive opportunities to join in with their children's development. Adults systematically note down and record what children can say or do. Assessments, which are regularly completed, display developing accuracy in evaluating children's progress and informing planning. The recent inspired development to outdoor provision reflects the ambition and growing confidence and experience of leaders and managers.

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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

Just under one third of all parents and carers returned the questionnaire with their views of the school. This is broadly in line with the national average level of returns. The views expressed were entirely positive about their happiness with their children's experiences and the way the school meets their children's particular needs. Parents and carers spoke extremely highly of the school's friendly, welcoming atmosphere, approachable staff and of the high quality 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 Easington Lane 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 86 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 240 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	46	53	38	44	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	59	69	26	30	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	56	65	30	35	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	54	63	30	35	2	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	61	71	24	28	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	58	67	26	30	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	54	63	32	37	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)	49	57	35	41	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	55	64	31	36	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	45	52	37	43	3	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	41	48	43	50	1	1	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	57	66	29	34	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	58	67	28	33	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.



4 April 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Easington Lane Primary School, Houghton le Spring, DH5 0JT

I want to thank 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.

Easington Lane is a good and improving school. We were impressed by your good behaviour and helpful and considerate attitudes. The staff really take excellent care of you. You clearly feel confident and safe, because of this and the highly effective way staff protect you from any risk. You understand the benefits of eating healthily and keeping fit. The excellent links the staff enjoy with your parents and carers, add to the quality of your development. Some of you told us that your teachers and the visitors you meet make your learning lively and fun. As a result, your skills are improving well as you get older. Your staff are taking positive action to enable you to make faster progress and this can be seen in your improving writing.

We have asked your headteacher, staff and the governing body to look at further ways of improving teaching to help you to progress at an even faster rate and achieve more. We would like staff to use the information they have on how well you are doing to plan activities which excite and interest you more, and provide you with detailed help to improve your work. We would like them to expect more of you and make sure your writing becomes more accurate and expressive. We have also asked that any changes to the way you are taught are carefully checked to make sure they are helping you make faster progress.

You can all play your part by continuing to work as hard as you can and attending school regularly. Thank you for helping with this inspection.

Best wishes for your future.

Yours sincerely

Clive Petts

Lead inspector

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