

George Washington Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133473
Local Authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	360515
Inspection dates	11–12 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Alison Thomson

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	398
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Colin Laidler
Headteacher	Mrs Susan Palmer
Date of previous school inspection	22 November 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 13 teachers and 18 lessons, and held meetings with the governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and analysed 98 questionnaires from parents and carers, 103 from pupils and 21 from staff. The team also looked at documents and policies, including those relating to the safeguarding of pupils, information the school had collected about the pupils' progress and the school's records of its monitoring of the quality of teaching.

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

- Current attainment and progress, particularly the progress of boys in Key Stage 1 and in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- How well teachers use assessment in lessons to help pupils improve their work and involve them in assessing their own learning.
- How effective transition is from Reception to Year 1.
- How effective subject leaders are in monitoring and evaluation in their areas.

Information about the school

This is a larger-than-average primary school. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is higher than average. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds and speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than average, although a higher-than-average proportion of pupils has a statement of special educational needs. The school has a specialist unit for children who are hearing impaired. There is a breakfast club and an after-school club which are managed by the governing body. The school has many awards, including Healthy School status and Activemark for the promotion of a healthy lifestyle.

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

George Washington Primary is a good school where care, guidance and support for its pupils are outstanding. Outcomes for pupils are good, with the extent to which they feel safe and their understanding of a healthy lifestyle excellent. Pupils, staff, parents and carers are very positive about all aspects of the school. The following comments sum up the views of parents and carers well, 'I feel I can't praise the George Washington enough.' and 'My son wouldn't be the person he is today if it wasn't for the staff at this school.'

Since the previous inspection there have been many improvements, including to the progress pupils make and in the standards that they attain. By the time pupils reach the end of Year 6, attainment is securely in line with that found nationally. This represents good progress from children's starting points in Reception that are generally below those expected for their age. Progress is now much more uniform and is good throughout school, having increased recently in Key Stage 1. This is due to improving transition arrangements from Reception ensuring better continuity, and to more rigorous monitoring leading to the early identification of any pupils in danger of underachieving. Small group and one-to-one tuition means that these pupils quickly catch up. Boys in Reception and in Key Stage 1 now have good achievement in line with the girls, due to a focus on boy-friendly topics, such as Toy Story and dinosaurs. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those pupils in the hearing impairment unit, also make good progress because of the close, well-focused support they receive both in school and from the excellent partnerships with many outside agencies.

Monitoring of teaching and learning has brought about clear improvements. Teaching is good overall, with some that is outstanding. Relationships between teachers and pupils are excellent and the pupils' good behaviour contributes well to their progress. Most teachers involve pupils well in assessing how well they are learning and pupils say that they know how to improve their work. Outstanding practice in teaching, however, is not shared well enough at present. In addition, subject leaders are not involved sufficiently in monitoring lessons in their areas. As a result attainment and the rise in progress are not as rapid as they might be.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher work very well together, and along with the leadership team, have been instrumental in the school's improving success. They have instilled a determination and self-reflection that is shared by all the staff. Engagement with parents and carers is good and attendance has improved to be in line with that found nationally. However, the school acknowledges that it has not convinced all parents and carers of the detrimental effects of extended absences. The governing body supports the school well, but is not sufficiently involved in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school at present. Despite this, the fact that the school has made good improvements in so many areas indicates that the capacity to improve even further is good.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment to above average and accelerate progress by:
 - sharing more effectively the outstanding practice in teaching that already exists within school
 - involving subject leaders more in observing lessons in their areas
 - improving attendance to be above that nationally by convincing all parents of the detrimental effects of extended absences
 - increasing the extent to which the governing body monitors and evaluates the work of the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Achievement is good and pupils enjoy their time in school. Their good behaviour impacts well on their learning and they look forward to challenges. Year 6 pupils were seen making outstanding progress in a history lesson. They worked enthusiastically together, using their mathematical skills well, to work out the percentage of different classes of passengers who survived the sinking of the Titanic. The school works effectively to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities by providing work which matches their skills and understanding effectively. As a result these pupils make similarly good progress to their classmates. Previous underperformance in some areas, such as that of boys in Key Stage 1, has been addressed. Excellent progress seen in a Year 2 lesson on developing writing skills exemplified this well.

Pupils' excellent understanding of a healthy lifestyle is helped greatly by the school's outstanding sporting partnerships - the wide range of trophies on display in the school foyer is a testament to the pupils' sporting prowess. The breakfast club also contributes significantly to healthy eating and to pupils' improved attendance, which is now broadly average. Pupils' basic skills, including strong information and communication technology skills and involvement in many enterprise activities, such as selling fruit at playtimes, prepare them well for their future. Pupils enjoy the many opportunities to take on responsibility and they have a strong voice through the school council, who were involved in writing a booklet on anti-bullying. This has helped to ensure that pupils feel extremely safe. Pupils have a well-developed understanding of right and wrong and appreciate the wonders of life around them. Relationships are happy and harmonious and pupils look after each other well. The headteacher is justly proud that there is, 'hardly a dry eye in the house' when pupils who can hear sing and sign Christmas carols alongside their deaf classmates.

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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	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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?

One of the key strengths of the school is the way it looks after its pupils as individuals, particularly the most vulnerable. Right from the start of each day when parents are welcomed into school to hand over their children to the teachers, children are looked after extremely well. Planning for individuals' needs, including those with specific learning difficulties such as those in the hearing impairment unit, is robust and their progress is carefully monitored.

The curriculum is adapted well to meet the needs of all its pupils; for example, in the way there is access to swimming lessons and opportunities to take part in residential visits. Pupils told the inspectors just how much they enjoyed such visits and gained much in confidence from them. Literacy and numeracy are embedded well into other topics, which are becoming increasingly more creative. Links with the neighbouring secondary school are strong, enabling pupils to make a smooth transition and quickly settle into their new schools. The school is rigorous in following up absences and this has contributed significantly to the pupils' improved attendance, although there are still too many absences due to holidays in term time.

The quality of teaching is good with examples of outstanding practice. Teaching is characterised by interesting activities and good pace. Information and communication technology is linked into other lessons very effectively and there is good use of interactive whiteboards. This was illustrated well during a Year 1 mathematics lesson where pupils

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modelled for others methods of adding 10 to one- and two-digit numbers. Assessment is used well to stimulate learning and raise attainment. For example, in a Year 5 science lesson on the respiratory system, pupils were encouraged to assess for themselves how well they were learning against clear success criteria. Very occasionally, in lessons where learning is less secure, teachers talk too much from the front of the class, giving pupils less opportunity to be involved in independent learning tasks. Teachers' marking is usually clear and helpful and pupils say that they know how to improve their work.

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?

Clear-sighted leadership and management are at the heart of the school's success. Self-evaluation is very accurate and involves staff at all levels, although subject leaders do not observe sufficient lessons in their areas at present. The headteacher and deputy headteacher communicate high expectations persuasively to staff so that all have a shared sense of direction and feel part of a successful team. There is a determination from staff at all levels to sustain and build upon the school's strengths. In this way, the school promotes good equality for all pupils and makes sure there is no discrimination on any grounds. Governance is satisfactory: members of the governing body are supportive of the school's work, although currently they are not involved enough in monitoring and evaluating its effectiveness.

Safeguarding procedures are good, with clear policies and secure risk-assessment systems. Promotion of community cohesion is good, particularly so at local and international levels. The school has a link with an elementary school in Washington DC that has a different ethnic make-up, and activities such as video calls are helping pupils to have a good understanding of other cultures. The school is in the process of developing more links with other schools in the United Kingdom. Parents and carers agree strongly that the school provides them with good help to enable them support their children's learning, for example, through workshops. At present, though, the school does not impress well enough on all parents and carers the detrimental effect of extended absences.

There is a wide range of very effective partnership involvement, including the work with sporting organisations and that with the local authority. These have had a marked effect on enhancing the personal development of all groups of pupils within the school. The school achieves good value for money.

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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	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
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

Children start in Reception with a range of skills that are overall below those expected for their age, particularly so in communication, language and literacy. They settle quickly, happily and confidently to make good progress. By the time they enter Year 1 the majority attain the levels expected for their age in most areas with a many exceeding their targets in mathematical development. Levels of attainment in communication, language and literacy remain below what is expected for many children, although progress there is also good. A close focus on phonics, enhanced by adults working with small groups of children, is helping to accelerate progress in this area, particularly that of boys. Children were seen enjoying reading sound stories together and this encourages linking letters to sounds well.

Adults provide well for children's welfare. Relationships are good between adults and children and children's behaviour is good. They are happy to take turns, work together and share resources. There are well-established routines to promote their personal and social development, such as tidying up and hand-washing. However, at times there are not sufficient opportunities to promote independence or responsibility, for example, to learn how to tie their aprons or self-register. There is a good balance between activities chosen by children and those led by adults. The newly-developed outdoor area is helping to mirror indoor activities well. Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. The team works successfully together to give the children a happy and productive time. Systems to check on what children know, understand and can do are becoming more robust and assessment information is increasingly being used effectively to inform future planning and transition into Year 1.

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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 over a quarter of parents and carers returned the questionnaire, which is below the national average for primary schools. However, those who responded were overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of the school's work, particularly the fact that they felt that the school kept their child safe and promoted healthy lifestyles. The vast majority felt that the school helps them to support their child's learning. This was something that the inspectors felt the school was doing increasingly well through its parent and carer workshops. No significant concerns were raised.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at George Washington 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 98 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 398 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	63	64	34	35	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	62	63	36	37	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	49	50	47	48	1	1	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	56	57	37	38	1	1	3	3
The teaching is good at this school	59	60	36	37	2	2	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	43	44	48	49	1	1	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	46	47	50	51	1	1	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)	43	44	47	48	2	2	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	50	51	41	42	3	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	38	39	53	54	3	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	32	33	58	59	3	3	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	50	51	44	45	2	2	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	57	58	36	37	3	3	1	1

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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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 May 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of George Washington Primary School, Washington, NE37 1NL

Thank you for your warm welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you and seeing how well you learn in class. Your views were very helpful to us.

Yours is a good school and it has a happy and friendly environment. You have an excellent understanding of what it means to be healthy. Most of you behave very well and work and play together very sensibly. You also look after each other well. Your questionnaires told us that you enjoy all the things that you do at school and that you feel very safe there. They also told us that you feel adults look after you well and that your teachers help you to learn well.

We have asked your headteacher to make the school even better by:

- asking teachers to share their good ideas in teaching more widely
- having those teachers who lead in different subject areas observe more lessons
- convincing all parents and carers of the importance of you coming to school regularly
- asking the governing body to check more rigorously how well the school is doing.

You can help by telling your teachers when you find lessons especially interesting, where you learn well. You can also help by coming to school regularly.

We would like to wish you all the best for the future and hope that you continue to enjoy your time in school.

Yours sincerely

Alison Thomson

Lead inspector

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