

Montalbo Primary School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|----------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 114115 |
| Local Authority | Durham |
| Inspection number | 357482 |
| Inspection dates | 24–25 May 2011 |
| Reporting inspector | Gordon Potter |

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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|--|--|
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 89 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr Graham Pannett |
| Headteacher | Mrs Gillian Bainbridge |
| Date of previous school inspection | 10 October 2007 |
| School address | Fairfield Road Barnard Castle County Durham DL12 8TN |
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors observed eight lessons taught by five teachers, visited other lessons with the headteacher, held meetings with representatives of the governing body, staff, parents and carers, and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of school policies and documentation relating to safeguarding and strategic planning, examples of pupils' work, assessment data and monitoring records. They also scrutinised the 69 questionnaires returned by parents and carers as well as 49 questionnaires from pupils and 10 returned by staff.

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

- Whether the teaching is consistently good across school so that all groups of pupils can make good progress.
- Whether the exciting opportunities for learning presented in the curriculum offer sufficient challenge to enable pupils to make good progress.
- Whether strategies introduced by the senior leadership team are successfully raising attainment and accelerating progress.

Information about the school

This is a much smaller than the average sized primary school. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average as is the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is average. The school has achieved Investors in Children accreditation, Healthy School status and the Artsmark Silver. The Nursery class in the Early Years Foundation Stage caters for 41 children from a wide geographical area. The Reception class in school admits 14 children, some of whom have not attended the Nursery.

An on-site private childcare provider, Montalbo Extra', offers pre-school provision, which will be inspected separately.

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

This is a satisfactory school. The senior leadership team has initiated successful strategies to improve pupils' writing and the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where children make a flying start to their learning. There are appropriate initiatives designed to secure improvements in teaching, the curriculum and the use of information about pupils' progress. These are having a positive impact on raising attainment and the rates at which pupils make progress. The headteacher is passionate about giving pupils memorable experiences to develop skills in sport, drama, art and singing. There are many exciting and enjoyable opportunities for pupils to communicate with children and adults from the wider world. Accordingly, they have a good understanding of life in different faiths and cultures. While there is some good teaching, where teachers make clear what pupils will learn and offer engaging activities, including the use of interactive whiteboard technology, it is satisfactory overall. In less effective lessons, teachers do not ask sufficiently probing questions and give too few opportunities for pupils to cooperatively or independently engage in challenging, open-ended, investigative activities. Information about pupils' skills and abilities is increasingly well used to help pupils know the level of their work and how to achieve the next level. It is used less effectively to plan work that is matched to individual needs; when this occurs, the pace of learning drops because work is not sufficiently challenging. It is not always clear how work planned becomes progressively harder.

All staff provide sensitive care and support so that pupils are happy and feel safe, have a good awareness of how to help others and how to stay fit and healthy. While pupils are keen to learn and have excellent attendance, they say that work is not always hard enough. The presentation of their work is often untidy. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress, helped by the caring support they receive.

Pupils have contributed strongly to developments in school. The influential school council and 'playground friends' help pupils behave and play well together. There are good partnerships with outside agencies to support pupils with a range of complex needs. Parents and carers are very supportive of the school's work with them and of how it encourages pupils' social and moral development. Clear actions designed to raise attainment and increase the rates at which pupils make progress, based on informed evaluation of what needs to be improved, indicate the school's satisfactory capacity for improvement.

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.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By the summer of 2012, further accelerate pupils' progress and raise their attainment, by:
 - improving the consistency of teaching so that all lessons have appropriate pace and challenge
 - providing more challenging opportunities for pupils to answer probing questions and explore for themselves in investigative and open-ended activities, independently or together
 - ensuring that the curriculum builds progressively on pupils' skills
 - ensuring that data are well used so that work is well matched to the needs of individual pupils.
- Improve the presentation of pupils' work by encouraging clear handwriting, well-drawn tables and diagrams and neat setting-out of work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils' achievement and enjoyment in their work are satisfactory. Their enjoyment is higher when they are engaged in lively activities, such as using hot-seating to explore the character of Captain Purplebeard the Pirate, or designing and making African shields to further their understanding of life in Tanzania. They enjoy using information communication technology (ICT), for example, in making animations about the sinking of the 'Titanic', writing newspapers and stories, and in employing the interactive whiteboard to develop their mathematical skills. They are very courteous, form positive relationships and wish to do well in their work, although they are not always encouraged to present their work neatly.

In this small school cohorts differ. Children have a wide range of ability when they start school but overall their skills on entry are in line with those expected for their age. While pupils attained standards which were high in 2008, pupils typically make satisfactory progress to attain standards which are average at the end of Year 6. Too few pupils attain the higher Level 3 at the end of Year 2 or Level 5 at the end of Year 6. However, evidence seen during the inspection indicates that gifted and talented pupils in the current Year 6 are attaining high standards in mathematics.

Pupils care for one another very well, have respect for each other and for the adults in the school, and say they feel very safe. Pupils are confident that they know exactly what to do in the event of a concern. They are well aware of the importance of a healthy diet and taking plenty of exercise. This understanding is reflected in the high take-up of school meals and their enthusiastic involvement in physical education, sport and after-school clubs. Pupils make a strong contribution to the school community through the democratically-elected school council and by acting as playground helpers and play leaders. They support a range of charities and participate in competitions with other local schools, in activities with the local church and in local festivals. Average attainment, regular involvement in enterprise activities and well-developed skills in team work and in ICT, ensure that pupils' preparation for their future education is good. This strength is further emphasised by pupils' outstanding attendance.

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 | 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 | 3 |
| 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 | 1 |
| The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 |

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is satisfactory overall, although there are some inconsistencies in quality. The majority of teachers employ interactive whiteboard technology well to engage pupils and plan opportunities for pupils to learn through practical activities, role play, games and using ICT. In the best lessons, pupils are clear about the purpose of the lessons and teachers encourage pupils to evaluate how well they have progressed towards understanding the lesson objectives. Teachers use questions well to check that pupils have made progress. They use questions less successfully to encourage pupils to develop their ideas. Teachers strive to make learning fun, although occasionally there are too many low-level activities and some work lacks challenge. Occasionally, however, the pace of learning drops because teachers offer too much information and pupils are prevented from getting on with challenging and open-ended tasks, independently or together. Marking and target-setting are used effectively to tell pupils how well they have achieved in individual tasks and to ensure they are clear about how to improve their work. Some of the teachers' planning, however, does not always build in sufficient steps to ensure work becomes progressively harder.

The curriculum contributes to pupils' satisfactory progress by offering interesting activities which help them to see the links between subjects and develop and apply important skills. For example, work on the Great Fire of London successfully develops pupils' imagination,

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research and writing skills. The school has well-developed and successful practices which ensure that pupils are confident readers. There are well-planned enrichment activities, including visitors from representatives of different faiths and cultures and visits to Robinwood residential centre and Bowes Museum. The opportunities provided for pupils to work with local professionals, help to develop pupils' skills in science, art and history and to promote their well-developed understanding and tolerance of other faiths and cultures. There are many popular extra-curricular clubs, which promote learning and enjoyment in sporting, arts and environmental activities, including cookery, film club, opportunities to learn the guitar and recorder, and the development of the impressive school garden.

Pupils are cared for very well, so that their varied emotional and social needs are well met and they develop self-esteem, respect and a sense of responsibility. There are successful strategies to help those pupils who are potentially vulnerable, those with specific learning needs and the few pupils who have English as an additional language. The school works extremely successfully to encourage pupils to attend regularly. Well-established and effective practices prepare parents and carers for the start of school life when their children join the Early Years Foundation Stage. Good transition arrangements ease the movement of pupils as they move from class to class and when they transfer to secondary school.

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 headteacher has a commitment to ensuring pupils are happy and safe in school and enjoy their learning. Working closely with the deputy headteacher, she has introduced initiatives that have improved standards in writing and provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They have developed other appropriate strategies, including effective systems for tracking pupils' progress and ideas to make pupils' learning more interesting. However, these have not as yet had a significant impact on raising attainment or improving the rates at which pupils make progress. The governing body supports the school well and has clear procedures to monitor learning and pupils' progress. However, it has not challenged the school strongly enough to raise standards. All staff in this small school have clear roles and responsibilities and are involved in opportunities to contribute to curriculum development, decision-making and the school improvement plan.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust, meet government requirements and secure pupils' safety. It has close links with outside agencies to support the wide range of individual needs of pupils and to offer memorable experiences. A clear commitment to promoting equal opportunities, to ensuring that discrimination against any

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group is avoided and to raising pupils' attainment, means that the school's promotion of equality of opportunity is good. The school is proud of its inclusive nature and makes a good contribution to community cohesion. The sense of unity in the school is strong and there are strong links with the local community. There is a well-developed awareness of life in other countries and a clear understanding of Britain as a diverse, multicultural society. The school has introduced a range of effective initiatives to support parents' and carers' learning and to involve them closely in their children's learning, including supporting learning at home and regular information about their children.

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 | 3 |
| 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 | 3 |

Early Years Foundation Stage

Effective interventions, by all adults, are skilfully directed to develop children's skills in counting, speaking and listening, writing and linking sounds and letters. This skilful teaching, allied to recent improvements to the learning environment, ensures that children now make good progress from their starting points. All staff offer excellent care and provide children with many stimulating activities both indoors and outdoors. The range of child-initiated activities is particularly effective in encouraging children to become extremely inquiring, caring and confident individuals. Children particularly enjoy tending the plants in their garden, searching for dinosaur eggs and making volcanoes. The outdoor provision in the Reception class is less-well resourced than in the nursery area and this limits some opportunities for play and outdoor learning. There are highly effective partnerships with parents and carers, who regularly work alongside their children or offer classes themselves, for example, in fell-rescue or the making of jewellery. These links enable children to settle quickly into the Nursery and Reception classes and allow parents and carers to understand how well their children are progressing, especially through the children's learning records.

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A range of healthy snacks and drinking water, opportunities for exercise and clear guidelines for hand washing, help children to develop a clear understanding of how to stay healthy. Staff ensure that requirements regarding children's safety are rigorously met. Good leadership and management include effective procedures for planning and assessment, although information about children's skills and abilities is as yet less well-used to offer a clear picture of overall progress. The staff team share the same vision and this supports a climate of continued improvement.

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

Approximately three-quarters of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. The respondents support the school extremely strongly. The overwhelming majority is happy with their child's experience at school. Likewise, almost all parents and carers are strongly supportive of the way the school informs them about their child's progress and helps them support their child at home. The overwhelming majority believes that unacceptable behaviour is dealt with effectively and that the school helps children to feel safe and stay healthy. The inspection reflects the view that these are positive features of the school.

Almost all parents and carers believe that management and teaching are good and that pupils make good progress. While the inspection acknowledges that the school strives hard to achieve these things, inspectors believe that opportunities are missed to make lessons more challenging and this slows pupils' progress.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Montalbo 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 69 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 89 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements | Strongly agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|---|-------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 52 | 75 | 16 | 23 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 56 | 81 | 12 | 17 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| My school informs me about my child's progress | 48 | 70 | 17 | 25 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 49 | 71 | 17 | 25 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 48 | 70 | 19 | 28 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning | 39 | 57 | 28 | 41 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 44 | 64 | 23 | 33 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 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) | 47 | 68 | 19 | 28 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs | 50 | 72 | 16 | 23 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 44 | 64 | 21 | 30 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 1 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 40 | 58 | 25 | 36 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 46 | 67 | 20 | 29 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school | 57 | 83 | 10 | 14 | 1 | 1 | 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.



26 May 2011

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Montalbo Primary School, Barnard Castle, DL12 8TN

On behalf of the inspection team, thank you for making us so welcome when we inspected your school.

You go to a satisfactory school which is improving because your teachers know what to do to make it better. The team was impressed by your behaviour, politeness and the great care and respect you have for one another. Your attendance is excellent. You told us that you look forward to coming to school because you like your teachers and appreciate the activities the school provides for you, such as visits and clubs. You enjoy lessons, especially those where you are doing exciting activities such as drama and art. Your teachers take great care of you and try hard to make your lessons stimulating for you. However, as some of you told me, your work is not always hard enough. Your parents and carers like the school very much. Your teachers have agreed with us that they should help your school to improve even more by:

- helping you reach higher standards at the end of Year 6, by providing more opportunities for you to answer probing questions, investigate together and solve problems
- making sure that all your lessons have pace and challenge
- making sure that all the information that teachers have about how well you are doing is used to plan work that is at the right level for all of you
- helping you to keep your exercise books tidy and present your work more neatly.

You can help by continuing to do your best and keeping up your excellent attendance. We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Gordon Potter
Lead Inspector

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