

Stakeford First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122178
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	380413
Inspection dates	20–21 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Irene Cochrane

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	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	117
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jackie Rowell
Headteacher	Julie Hall
Date of previous school inspection	22 January 2009
School address	East Ford Road Stakeford Choppington NE62 5TZ
Telephone number	01670 812369
Fax number	01670 816388
Email address	julie.hall01@northumberland.gov.uk

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Store Street
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors observed eight lessons, taught by six teachers and held meetings with pupils, members of the governing body and staff. They observed pupils at work, and looked at the data the school has collected on pupils' progress, the safeguarding procedures, samples of pupils' books and records of the school's monitoring and review process. They also considered 44 questionnaires returned by parents and carers as well as analysing questionnaires from pupils and staff.

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

- The effectiveness of the senior leaders in taking steps to secure school improvement.
- The impact of the teachers' use of assessment on planning, so that more-able pupils achieve better, particularly in writing.
- Whether or not the assessment and tracking procedures are efficient in identifying underachievement and informing planning to accelerate progress for all pupils.

Information about the school

This is a smaller-than-average-sized first school. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average and nearly all pupils are from White British heritages. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The school holds a number of awards, including the Activemark and Healthy School status.

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 school. It has improved at a good rate since the last inspection. The strong team spirit and vision of the headteacher are at the heart of the positive and caring ethos in the school. This contributes well to pupils' personal development and good behaviour. Parents and carers are very positive in their support. As one parent said, 'Stakeford First School is a lovely, happy and approachable place to learn'.

Most children start school in The Early Years Foundation Stage with levels of development that are lower than those typical for their age. Pupils make good progress and attainment is broadly average by the time they leave school at the end of Year 4. These outcomes represent good achievement. The rate of progress has improved steadily over the last three years, as a result of actions taken by leaders. The areas for improvement at the time of the last inspection have been addressed well, so that pupils now benefit from a wider range of opportunities to extend their writing across the curriculum. There is clear evidence to show that outcomes have improved for more-able pupils as a result of effective planning and raised expectations. Rigorous monitoring of pupils' progress by staff and senior leaders is having a positive impact on pupils' outcomes.

The quality of teaching is good. It has improved because teachers and their assistants are now much clearer about how to accelerate pupils' learning. Pupils enjoy the practical activities that engage them in their learning. However, there is a minority of lessons when teachers talk to the class for too long and, as a result, the time available for active learning is restricted. The use of assessment has improved but is not yet consistent. In the majority of lessons, teachers use assessment information well. In some lessons, information gathered could be used to provide more challenge and the quality of guidance offered through marking, varies. Teachers plan well-defined targets aimed at guiding pupils to improve their learning but these are not always communicated clearly to them.

The curriculum provides a wide range of enrichment and practical opportunities, which contribute significantly to pupils' enjoyment. Pupils appreciate the many opportunities to take responsibility and feel safe in school because they have trusted adults to look after them. They enjoy working together and regularly raise money for others less fortunate than themselves. Pupils manage their own class fund, which makes a good contribution to their basic skills and future economic well-being.

Senior leaders understand the school's main strengths and areas for development and identify appropriate priorities for improvement. Sharply-focused interventions have resulted in improved outcomes for pupils and demonstrate the school's good capacity for improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement further by strengthening teaching so that:
 - there is a brisk pace in all lessons with a better balance between teachers' talk and pupils' activity to stimulate learning for all pupils
 - the targets for lessons are clearly communicated to pupils in all lessons.

- Improve the use of assessment by:
 - ensuring pupils' work is consistently marked to the best standard so that pupils are given clear guidance on how to improve
 - using information gathered to match work to pupils' individual needs and talents in order to consistently inspire and challenge them to learn.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils enjoy learning and achieve well because of the stimulating lessons they receive. In lessons, pupils respond well to each other and work effectively in pairs and groups to solve problems and share their ideas. For example, pupils working in teams showed much enthusiasm and motivation in telling the time in Spanish. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and behave well in and around school. They say they enjoy coming to school because of all the visits and visitors, such as, the visit from members of the fire brigade.

Children's levels of development on entry to the Nursery vary but are generally below those typical for their age in their communication, language and literacy skills. Children make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes and most reach average attainment by the time they enter Year 1. By the end of Year 4, attainment matches the expectations for pupils of their age, with particular strengths in reading and an improving proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels in all subjects. Attainment by Year 2 has been broadly average but in 2011, unvalidated assessment data indicates that it significantly improved in all subjects. This is attributed to the impact of focused intervention and guided support work. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress as their peers overall.

Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of taking regular exercise and the need for a healthy diet. They enjoyed eating the vegetables they had grown in the school garden. Pupils feel safe at school because of the care they receive from staff and they know who to go to for help should the need arise. Their contribution to the community is good because pupils are keen to take on extra responsibilities, such as planting trees, attending the local Remembrance Service and officially opening the local co-operative shop. Their good engagement in decision making, well-developed personal skills and consistently improving basic skills, mean they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

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

How effective is the provision?

Pupils benefit from lessons which have been well planned to include first-hand experiences and opportunities to work cooperatively with their peers. As a result, pupils' participate well and gain in confidence. In the most effective lessons, there is brisk pace and teachers have high expectations. This is not consistently so in all lessons. Teachers are effective in ensuring that pupils understand the tasks set for them but not all pupils are clear about the targets they have to achieve to move to the next level in their learning. Teaching assistants support pupils' learning well, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Assessment practice has developed well since the last inspection, but there are inconsistencies in using the information to shape learning activities to meet individual needs and talents, and in the quality of marking for some pupils.

The curriculum is well organised with a strong emphasis on developing basic skills. Themes are used to stimulate interest and provide more active learning, when pupils can apply and practice their skills. As a result, pupils are given a range of first-hand experiences to write about which has had a positive impact on outcomes for all pupil groups. For example, the work with Creative Partnerships on a 'Dr Who' project promoted boys' interest to write and further developed their literacy skills, particularly in writing. The curriculum is enriched by visitors to the school, visits to places of interest, and by a good range of well-attended after-school clubs.

Adults know pupils well and readily take responsibility for their well-being. As a result, pupils feel safe and well supported. Pupils from challenging circumstances or those who are potentially vulnerable due to their circumstances are well cared for and good use is made of the expertise of external support agencies.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The year-on-year progress the school is making demonstrates the capable leadership of the headteacher. The rigorous monitoring of lessons has improved the quality of teaching and raised expectations of teachers, their assistants and their pupils. School leadership has been further strengthened by the developing confidence and expertise of senior leaders in monitoring and evaluating school performance. Systematic checking on progress and evaluating the impact of interventions are now delegated responsibilities, impacting upon improved outcomes. As a result, there is shared vision and enthusiasm for further school improvement.

The governing body are highly supportive of the school and are kept informed of school developments. There is an understanding of the strengths and areas in need of improvement for the school. Members of the governing body are regularly involved in school life through structured committees where individual skills are used to support the school. The governing body ensures that formal systems of care, including those for safeguarding pupils are secure and meet requirements, but their role in monitoring and evaluating the impact of school plans and actions are not incisive enough. The school's detailed assessment data contribute to the work in promoting equal opportunities well and there is no evidence of discrimination. For example, the achievement of more-able pupils has been successfully boosted by the end of Year 4.

The school has a well-structured approach to promoting community cohesion and as a result, pupils find out about a range of cultures and have a good understanding about the diverse nature of society. Good partnerships exist with parents and carers through a range of activities, such as helping on school outings, involvement in 'family challenges', fundraising and supporting in school. Effective communication ensures that the partnership with parents and carers supports learning well.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2

The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2
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Early Years Foundation Stage

Children quickly settle and gain confidence in the Nursery and Reception classes, as a result of the good quality care and support they receive from adults. They make good progress and reach average standards by the time they enter Year 1. Children understand school routines and readily make choices from the wide variety of resources provided. Observations of children’s play and learning are used well to identify what children can do and what they need to learn next. Consequently, children enjoy the well-planned practical activities that make learning fun, such as nursery children digging up vegetables to make their own soup. A regular focus on learning letters and sounds in the Reception class is having a positive impact on children’s communication, language and literacy skills and progress is steadily improving. Opportunities to explore and investigate outdoors are provided but the school has already identified the need to further develop this area and increase the time available to children.

Behaviour is good as children learn to share and take turns. There is an increasing number of children who are potentially vulnerable due to their circumstances, or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Their needs met well and they are provided with sensitive support and inclusive provision. Welfare requirements are met and encourage safe habits. Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good, reflecting a clear evaluation of provision and of children’s progress, and in setting a clear agenda for further 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 in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

An above average proportion of parents and carers returned the questionnaires. The vast majority of are highly positive about the work of the school and virtually no negative comments were expressed. Inspection evidence supports the positive views made about the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Stakeford First 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 inspector received 44 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 100 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	34	77	10	23	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	36	82	8	18	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	23	52	21	48	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	19	43	22	50	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	25	57	18	41	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	21	48	22	50	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	27	61	17	39	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)	23	52	19	43	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	24	55	18	41	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	20	45	22	50	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	20	45	22	50	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	23	52	20	45	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	30	68	13	30	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 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.



22 September 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stakeford First School, Choppington, NE62 5TZ

Thank you very much for the welcome you gave to me and my colleague when we came to inspect your school. A particular thank you goes to those of you who filled in questionnaires or met with us to talk about your school. We are pleased to know that you enjoy coming to school.

Your school has improved since the last inspection and is now good. The adults care well for you and you enjoy the interesting activities that teachers plan in your lessons. We have asked your headteacher and the people that work with her, to do the following things to make your school even better.

- Make sure that all lessons have a quick pace to help you reach even higher standards.
- Remind you of your targets in lessons to help you improve your work.
- Make sure that your work is always well marked so you know what you have to do to improve.
- Make sure that teachers always use the information they have on how well you are doing to prepare activities to inspire you all to learn even more.

You can play your part by working as hard as you can and continuing to attend regularly. Thank you again for helping with this inspection.

Yours sincerely

Irene Cochrane
Lead inspector

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