

Linton First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122199
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	380422
Inspection dates	20–21 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Gordon Potter

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	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	20
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sid Chapman
Headteacher	Katherine Urwin
Date of previous school inspection	20 March 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. The inspector observed six lessons taught by three teachers, conducted visits to lessons with the headteacher and held meetings with representatives of the governing body, staff, parents and carers, and groups of pupils. He 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. He scrutinised the 10 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, as well as questionnaires from pupils and staff.

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

- Whether a stimulating curriculum and good teaching across school enable all groups of pupils to make good progress.
- Whether assessment information about pupils' skills and abilities is well used to measure pupils' progress over time and to plan work that offers appropriate pace and challenge for all groups of pupils.
- Whether pupils have a clear understanding of the United Kingdom as a diverse, multicultural society and of life in other countries.

Information about the school

This school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds, with a significant percentage of pupils from Traveller and Gypsy/Roma families. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. The school has achieved Activemark and Healthy Schools 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. All staff provide exceptional care and support, which ensure that pupils are happy, feel extremely safe and show a good awareness of how to stay fit and healthy. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the school through shared roles and responsibilities and they say that 'playground friends' help them play together and behave well. They show outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and have an exceptional sense of right and wrong and how to help others. Outstanding partnerships with outside agencies encourage creative and enterprise skills and there are highly effective links to support pupils with a range of complex needs. The school has excellent arrangements to engage with parents and carers and, accordingly, parents and carers are exceptionally supportive of the school.

Pupils have a very clear understanding of different faiths and cultures because the school celebrates the cultural diversity of its pupils, alongside its local heritage and a wider understanding of the United Kingdom as a diverse, multicultural society. Well-judged initiatives ensure that good teaching engages pupils and helps all groups to make good progress. The curriculum provides a range of memorable experiences and has a strong emphasis on developing pupils' basic skills in English and mathematics. However, in some lessons, there are too few opportunities for pupils to work together, solve problems and apply their skills in open-ended and investigative activities. Teachers offer too much help, the pace of learning drops and progress slows. Some pupils in Years 1 and 2 would benefit from further exposure to the early learning goals and the range of learning experiences which served them well in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Teachers check pupils' understanding constantly and help pupils recognise how well they are doing. Effective use of targets and accurate marking tell pupils how well they have done and how to improve. Robust tracking gathers accurate information about pupils' abilities and the progress they are making so that work is matched to pupils' individual learning needs well.

The school has many well-judged strategies to encourage attendance and rates of persistent absenteeism are low. However, attendance remains average because a few families do not see the benefits of ensuring their children attend regularly and too many families take holidays during term time. The school's accurate self-evaluation and its success in ensuring pupils make good progress from their starting points demonstrate its good capacity to sustain improvement. It provides good value for money.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the rates at which pupils make progress and raise pupils' attainment to higher levels by the summer of 2012, by:
 - ensuring that all lessons have a brisk pace and offer sufficient opportunities for pupils to work together, solve problems and apply their skills in open-ended investigative activities
 - ensuring that, where appropriate, pupils in Years 1 and 2 have continued exposure to the early learning goals and the principles of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

- Improve attendance by working closely with families to help them ensure their children come to school regularly.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The extent to which pupils achieve and enjoy their work is good. Pupils are courteous, have good attitudes, form positive relationships and show great keenness to do well in their work. In lessons, they enjoy challenging and lively activities especially, such as problem solving activities in mathematics, painting or using information and communication technology (ICT) to depict apples in the style of Cézanne, or writing about the snails they have investigated.

While cohorts vary in this extremely small school, the skills and abilities with which pupils enter school are typically below and often well below the levels expected for their age, especially in communication, language and literacy, and knowledge and understanding of the world. Pupils make good progress to reach levels of attainment which are in line with expectations at the end of Year 4. Well-targeted initiatives have led to increased progress in mathematics and English. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are cared for exceptionally well and supported in their learning and they make good progress because their work offers appropriate challenge and interest.

Pupils care for one another very well, have great respect for each other and for the adults in the school, and say they feel exceptionally safe. They are confident that they know exactly what to do in the event of a concern. Pupils are well aware of the importance of a healthy diet and of taking plenty of exercise. That is reflected in their enthusiastic involvement in physical education and the exceptionally high take-up of healthy school meals. Pupils make an exceptionally positive contribution to the school community through whole-school discussions in which pupils express their concerns and ideas. They take on roles willingly, such as acting as fruit and milk monitors and as librarians and playground friends, helping everyone to eat healthily, behave well and feel extremely safe. Pupils support a range of charities and participate in competitions with other local schools. They play a central role in organising and participating in activities in the village. Average attendance rates, strong understanding of the issues related to the world of work and confident use of skills in ICT mean that pupils are well equipped for their future economic well-being.

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	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
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	1

How effective is the provision?

Teachers make learning fun, explain clearly to pupils what they will learn and how they will know if they have succeeded. They employ interactive whiteboard technology well to engage pupils and plan effective opportunities for pupils to learn through practical activities, including experiments, games and using ICT. Teachers use questions well to ascertain what pupils know already and check that they have made progress. There are very strong relationships and teachers and teaching assistants interact extremely well with pupils to support them in their learning. Occasionally, the pace of learning drops. That is often because introductory activities go on for too long, teachers offer too much information and pupils are prevented from getting on with tasks or exploring together.

The curriculum contributes to pupils' good progress by offering a range of stimulating activities, which are increasingly helping them to see the links between subjects and to develop and apply important skills. For example, work on animal habitats develops creativity and investigative and research skills successfully. There are good procedures to promote reading and there are many opportunities for pupils to write in subjects across the curriculum. Well-planned enrichment activities, including visits to a wildlife sanctuary and castles, and to experience the cultural diversity in Newcastle, visits from religious groups and opportunities to work with musicians, help to develop pupils' skills in science and art and their understanding of environmental issues and other faiths and cultures. There are many popular extra-curricular clubs which promote learning and enjoyment in sporting, arts and environmental activities, including ukulele and cooking.

The exceptionally effective work of all staff ensures that pupils' individual needs are recognised and strategies are put in place to help those pupils who have a range of complex social, emotional and behavioural needs, and their families. A key feature is the sensitive care for the pupils who are from Traveller or Gypsy/Roma families. Pupils are cared for exceptionally well, their varied learning needs are met and they

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

develop self-esteem, respect and a sense of responsibility. The school works closely with parents and carers to ensure that most pupils attend regularly. In addition, the school is a source of advice and support for parents and carers in confronting some difficult issues in their everyday lives. Well-established and highly effective practices involve parents and carers when their children enter school, move from class to class and transfer to middle school.

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?

The highly experienced, respected and influential headteacher has pursued and implemented strategies rigorously and skilfully that have brought about an improvement in school effectiveness. Very ably supported by all members of this small staff, she has established effective systems for assessing pupils' attainment and monitoring the effectiveness of teaching. The systems have helped to improve teaching, the Early Years Foundation Stage and the curriculum, and develop assessment procedures that measure pupils' attainment and progress accurately. The headteacher's view of shared and collaborative leadership ensures that all staff have clearly defined roles and responsibilities and are enthusiastic about their contribution to the development of key areas of the curriculum. The staff welcome the opportunities to contribute to decision making and the very detailed school improvement plan and to advance their own professional development. The governing body offers strong support and challenge to the school skilfully and monitors its work closely.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils are good, as all aspects meet government requirements and are monitored rigorously and reviewed to ensure pupils' safety. The success of the arrangements is reflected in how exceptionally safe pupils feel and in their keen awareness of potential risks to their well-being. The school has highly effective links with outside agencies to support the pupils' wide ranging needs and to develop learning opportunities. The school has a range of extremely effective initiatives to involve parents and carers in their children's learning, including family learning opportunities, supporting learning at home and regular information about their children's progress.

There is a clear commitment to promoting equal opportunities and to ensuring that discrimination against any group is avoided at all times. The school is proud of its inclusive nature and makes an outstanding contribution to community cohesion. The sense of community in the school is exceptionally strong and there are excellent links with the local neighbourhood. Pupils have a highly developed understanding of the United Kingdom as a diverse, multicultural society and of life in other countries.

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	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
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	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Effective interventions by all adults are directed skilfully to develop skills in counting, speaking and listening and in linking sounds and letters, and help children to make good progress from their starting points. However, their skills and abilities remain below average levels as they enter Year 1. Children benefit from learning alongside older pupils and thrive on creative activities, such as craft, painting, writing and imaginative play. Accordingly, they develop as confident and caring individuals. They enjoy particularly construction, discovering about minibeasts and writing and drawing. There is a clear commitment to outdoor learning and children enjoy role-play activities and exploring together. However, difficult access to the outside area limits opportunities for children to have free interchange between indoor and outdoor learning.

Children develop independence and a good understanding of how to stay healthy through accessing healthy snacks and drinks. Staff ensure that requirements regarding children's safety are met rigorously. They encourage children to share, to take turns and to behave well. The headteacher, who operates as the Early Years Foundation Stage leader, has a very clear understanding of how children learn and stimulates their enthusiasm so that work is well planned and based on observations of children's learning. Occasionally, it is not clear how activities are linked specifically to learning goals. Extremely positive partnerships with parents and carers enable children to settle quickly into the Reception class and excellent arrangements exist for transition into Year 1. The learning journals, in particular, help parents and carers to understand how well their children are progressing.

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

Approximately four-fifths of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. The respondents strongly support the school and its leaders and how they meet their children's needs, ensuring their children enjoy school and is healthy and safe. The inspection findings reflect the very positive views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Linton 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 10 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 20 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	9	90	1	10	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	10	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	10	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	10	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	10	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	10	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	8	80	2	20	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)	10	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	10	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	9	90	1	10	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	9	90	1	10	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	9	90	1	10	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	10	100	0	0	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.



Thursday 22 September 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Linton First School, Morpeth, NE61 5SG

Thank you for making me so welcome when I inspected your school and for taking me on your visit to the wildlife sanctuary. You go to a good school and your teachers know how to make it even better. I was impressed by the way you all help in the school and your excellent artwork. Your behaviour, politeness and the great care and respect you have for one another are admirable. Your teachers take exceptional care of you and try hard to make your lessons fun and help you to work hard. You told me 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. Your parents and carers like the school very much. Your teachers have agreed with me that they should do the following things to help your school to improve even more:

- help you reach higher standards at the end of Year 4 by providing more opportunities for you to investigate together, solve problems and apply your skills in exciting activities
- give pupils in Years 1 and 2 more opportunities to learn through playing together
- work with your parents and carers to make sure that more of you attend school more regularly.

You can help by continuing to do your best and attending regularly. I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Gordon Potter
Lead Inspector

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