

Silver Tree Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123350
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	380640
Inspection dates	12–13 October 2011
Reporting inspector	John Paddick

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	162
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jimmy Jamieson
Headteacher	John Trueman
Date of previous school inspection	11 March 2009
School address	Durham Road Ushaw Moor Durham DH7 7LF
Telephone number	0191 373 0622
Fax number	0191 373 0622
Email address	p3519.admin@durhamlearning.net

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Store Street
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They visited 10 lessons taught by seven teachers. Inspectors scrutinised a wide variety of pupils' work, especially in writing, mathematics and science. They held meetings with the headteacher, the Early Years Foundation Stage leader, subject leaders and the Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors also met with groups of pupils from Years 4 and 6. They observed the school's work and looked at minutes of the governing body meetings, the school development plan, records of pupils' progress and safeguarding documentation. Inspectors analysed 57 questionnaires from parents and carers, 81 from pupils in Years 3 to 6, and nine from members of staff.

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

- Is attainment in English still rising towards average levels?
- Are pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities making progress at the same rate as other pupils?
- Does the school make adequate arrangements to cater for pupils who join at other than the usual time?
- Does teaching cater equally well for all groups of pupils?

Information about the school

The school is smaller than the average primary school. The large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and very few are from minority-ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make up around a third of the school roll. This is well above the national average. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The proportion of pupils who join the school part-way through the year is well above average.

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

Silver Tree Primary School provides its pupils with a satisfactory and improving standard of education. It is a happy and welcoming school with many good features. For example, the good care, guidance and support enable all groups of pupils to do equally well and make at least satisfactory progress. This is a school which runs smoothly because teachers and classroom assistants manage pupils well and ensure that their behaviour is good. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and enjoy their education.

The school is characterised by a good atmosphere for learning and pupils who are keen to do well. Capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory. Pupils' attainment has risen since the previous inspection and their behaviour is much better. However, teaching is satisfactory as it was at the time of the previous inspection. Although there is some good teaching, there are still fundamental weaknesses in some lessons which restrict pupils' overall progress to being satisfactory rather than good. A tendency for some teachers to take too much time with explanations and oral questioning means that the time available for pupils to develop and practise skills is often too limited. The good lessons proceed with a fast pace and the full engagement of pupils of all ability in a wide range of activities, but in the less successful, but nevertheless satisfactory, ones the expectation of pupils is lower and the pace of learning is much slower. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children are making satisfactory rather than good progress because the planning of activities does not consistently challenge them to extend fully their existing skills and knowledge.

School self-evaluation is thorough and accurate. The staff and governing body have a very clear idea about what the school does well and what still needs to improve. School development plans target areas for improvement but monitoring and review procedures are insufficiently rigorous. This is partly because the plans themselves contain insufficient clear or precise quantitative targets so it is difficult to gauge whether intended improvements have actually materialised. For example, there are no precise targets for the amount of progress that managers expect each class to make in English and mathematics each year.

Up to 40% of schools whose effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching to consistently good or better by:
 - reducing the amount of teacher-talk and oral questioning and increasing opportunities for pupils to be involved in more active learning
 - increasing pace and setting more challenging time targets for the completion of tasks.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, increase the pace of learning by improving the planning and organisation of activities to ensure that all children are fully challenged.
- Improve school development planning by:
 - including easily measurable and precise targets for the quality of teaching and pupils' attainment and progress
 - monitoring these targets rigorously so that the impact of improvements in provision can be firmly linked to outcomes.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils' attitudes to learning and behaviour in lessons are generally good and pupils say that they enjoy school. They are polite, cooperative and enjoy productive relationships with the adults who work with them. These positive attitudes to learning have contributed to a rise in attainment since the last inspection. The school's results in the National Curriculum tests in English and mathematics in Year 6 have improved, reaching broadly average levels in mathematics and just short of average in English. This represents satisfactory achievement because children join the Reception year with levels of development that are below those typical for their age. Classroom observations and scrutiny of pupils' written work during the inspection confirm that improvements have been secured. Pupils' written work in English, mathematics and science is of broadly average standard. It is extensive, logically set out and well presented. Across the school, pupils' current rates of progress are satisfactory and sometimes good. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who join the school part-way through the year also make satisfactory progress and sometimes do better than that.

Pupils have a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy diet and know why it is important to be involved in activities involving physical exercise. They engage enthusiastically in a wide range of activities offered to them, especially music, sport and visits. Their attendance has improved since the previous inspection and has reached average levels. The number of persistent absentees has fallen sharply. Pupils are eager to take responsibility and speak enthusiastically about the work of the school council and the way that the school enables them to become involved in activities in the local community. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory rather than good because their understanding and appreciation of other cultures and religions is relatively limited.

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	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching varies from year group to year group. It is satisfactory overall and enables all groups of pupils to make adequate progress in their seven years at the school. It is particularly strong in some classes for older pupils. Here the pace is brisk and pupils make good progress in reaching the level expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. In other classes, the pace of learning is much slower because teachers plan for pupils to do less in the time available. In the best lessons, teachers plan carefully for the full engagement of pupils of all abilities but, in others, there is evidence of some pupils not being adequately challenged. This is particularly evident in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Teachers mark pupils' work well so pupils know what they need to do to improve it. The school tracks their progress well but the data are not being used routinely by teachers in the preparation of lessons and in the evaluation of rates of pupils' progress.

The curriculum provides pupils with a secure route towards making satisfactory progress in their basic skills. It provides particularly well for pupils who fall behind in their education and need extra help. A wide range of extra-curricular activities and visits strongly promotes pupils' experience and personal development and helps pupils to gain confidence. Care, guidance and support for pupils are good. Pupils of all ages receive plenty of encouragement and support in terms of general welfare. Help and support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities ensure that they make progress as quickly as other pupils, particularly in terms of their personal development. A very good reading recovery programme provided on a one-to-one basis enables pupils to make up lost ground quickly. The school looks after pupils who join part-way through their primary education particularly well. One parent said, 'My son started at this school just before the summer holidays. Members of staff have done everything possible to help him to settle in. Nothing is too much trouble for them.' Good transition arrangements with the local secondary school mean that pupils are confident about moving to Year 7.

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

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 and senior staff have been successful in making improvements since the previous inspection. They have had a particularly effective focus on raising standards and improving pupils' attendance. Governance is satisfactory. Members of the governing body have a clear idea of the school's strong features and know what still needs to be improved. They have a secure understanding of the way that the school operates on a day-to-day basis because many of them visit very regularly. They challenge and probe when appropriate but their overall effectiveness is somewhat restricted by the fact that their roles are unclear in monitoring and evaluating the impact of improvements set out in the school development plan. The school successfully promotes productive links with parents and carers. It goes to considerable lengths to involve them in their children's education, for example, through providing regular reports on progress and explanations about the curriculum.

The school promotes equal opportunities well and there is no evidence of discrimination of any description. Pupils from all backgrounds are equally valued and the school goes to great lengths to ensure that they succeed in their education. Since the previous inspection, a particularly strong focus on attainment has meant that the school has almost closed the gap between its own performance and national averages. Partnerships with a wide variety of agencies are very successful in ensuring that barriers to learning are reduced or eliminated. They often strongly underpin quite substantial improvements in pupils' personal development and enable them to begin to learn. Safeguarding arrangements meet national requirements well and site security has a particularly high profile. All adults who work with children are thoroughly checked and procedures to ensure child protection are effectively managed. The school promotes community cohesion in a satisfactory manner rather than well. Pupils are involved in many very productive activities which help to draw the local community together but arrangements to give them first-hand experience of the cultures and religions that make up the United Kingdom are somewhat limited. Links with other countries are also limited but increasing.

These are the grades for the 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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make satisfactory progress in Reception. Some children join the school with levels of development that are typical for their age but many do not. By the time they transfer to Year 1, the development of their knowledge and skills is still below that expected for their age. They make satisfactory progress because members of staff and helpers provide them with an adequate range of activities, both adult-led and those which the children can choose. Children cooperate well with the adults who work with them and trust them. Many are keen to show their work to visitors.

Satisfactory leadership and management mean that the provision is sufficiently varied and adults are suitably deployed. Relationships between adults and children are uniformly good and productive and all safeguarding requirements are fully met. Teaching is satisfactory rather than good because it does not always fully challenge the more-able children. Adults are often more concerned about children completing tasks rather than taking the opportunity to question them and develop their communication and language skills. The quality of display and the range of inviting equipment and toys are quite limited and restrict the potential to promote greater interest and enjoyment amongst the children. Members of staff care for the children well and have a positive and productive relationship with parents and carers.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers have generally positive views of the school. Inspection findings very closely match these positive views. Almost all parents and carers who responded say that their children enjoy their education and that the school keeps them safe. The largest area of concern of a very small minority surrounds the way that the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors looked into this carefully and found that members of staff do use appropriate methods for ensuring that pupils behave well.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Silver Tree 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 57 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 162 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	31	54	24	42	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	35	61	21	37	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	26	46	25	44	5	9	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	28	49	25	44	3	5	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	27	47	24	42	4	7	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	27	47	25	44	5	9	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	29	51	26	46	1	2	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)	24	42	28	49	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	24	42	29	51	3	5	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	37	25	44	7	12	2	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	22	39	27	47	4	7	3	5
The school is led and managed effectively	29	51	21	37	4	7	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	34	60	18	32	4	7	1	2

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.



14 October 2011

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Silver Tree Primary School, Durham, DH7 7LF

Thank you for making me and my fellow inspectors welcome when we came to inspect your school recently. We were really impressed by your good behaviour and the way that you relate to visitors. A particular thank you goes to those of you who filled in our questionnaire or met with us at lunchtime to discuss your work and your school. Another thank you goes to those of you who were so keen to show us your work. We were very pleased to know that most of you are keen to work hard and that you really enjoy being at school.

We found that your school is providing you with a satisfactory and improving quality of education. Most of you are making satisfactory progress and some are doing better than that. This is because teaching is usually at least satisfactory and often good and that the school goes to great lengths to care for you. We were pleased to know about the way that the school provides you with extra help if you fall behind.

Your school can still improve further and we have asked the governing body, headteacher and staff to make some changes to help you all make faster progress and to raise your attainment. These are to:

- ensure that all of you have good teaching all of the time by ensuring that all of your lessons move along at a fast enough pace
- improve the planning of activities in Reception to ensure that they fully cater for children of all abilities
- set clear targets for the rate of progress made in all classes each year.

You can help by continuing to behave well and work hard.

Yours sincerely

John Paddick
Lead inspector

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