

Ponteland First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122217
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	380427
Inspection dates	28–29 November 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	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	340
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Maureen Milne
Headteacher	Lynn Blain
Date of previous school inspection	28 September 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 15 lessons taught by 12 teachers, including joint lesson observations with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. In addition, they conducted short visits to several classes with the headteacher. Inspectors held meetings with representatives of the governing body, senior leaders, headteachers of partner schools, representatives from the local authority, an external mathematics consultant, 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 132 questionnaires returned by parents and carers as well as 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.

- What strategies have been used by senior leaders to raise attainment and maintain it at a high level?
- How effectively do the curriculum and teaching enable all groups of pupils to make at least good progress?
- How effectively have school leaders developed strategies to reverse a decline in progress in mathematics in Key Stage 2?

Information about the school

This school is much larger than the average sized primary school. Most pupils are White British, although the school caters for increasing proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well below average. The proportion of pupils at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average. The school includes pupils who are dual-registered with a school for pupils with severe learning difficulties. It has achieved Healthy Schools status, the Activemark, Artsmark and the ICT Mark. The deputy headteacher has been in post since May 2011.

A private organisation provides out-of-school care in the form of breakfast- and after-school clubs, 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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. Outcomes for pupils are outstanding. Pupils' attainment is well above that expected nationally for nine year olds, and they make outstanding progress from their starting points. This is particularly true in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, where children get off to a flying start, as a result of good and often excellent teaching and a stimulating curriculum. While progress in Key Stage 2 is good, it is slower in mathematics than in English. The use of data to identify pupils' individual needs and to plan appropriate work, which has been so successful in improving pupils' reading and writing, has not been fully embedded in the teaching of mathematics. In short daily sessions, which are designed to encourage mathematical thinking, teachers very successfully ask probing questions that challenge pupils to extend their thinking. However, this approach is not applied in mathematics lessons where activities occasionally lack pace and challenge and there are too few opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills. While marking tells pupils how well they have done, it is used less effectively to tell pupils how to improve their work. Teachers do not always allow sufficient opportunities for pupils to act upon any advice given.

All staff provide exceptionally sensitive care, guidance and support, including outstanding arrangements for safeguarding and protecting pupils. As a result, pupils' well-being and personal development are promoted extremely well and pupils are happy and feel very safe. Their behaviour is outstanding and their awareness of being healthy and fit is good, as is their contribution to the school and the wider community. They have a strong sense of how to help others and a very clear understanding of different faiths and cultures because the school celebrates the growing ethnic and religious diversity of its pupils, as well as raising pupils' awareness of global issues. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are extremely well cared for and supported in their learning and they make outstanding progress because their work offers appropriate challenge and interest.

The headteacher provides excellent leadership, which has ensured that good teaching has raised pupils' attainment and sustained it at a high level. The school has highly effective arrangements to engage with parents and carers and, accordingly, they are highly supportive of the school. Outstanding partnerships with outside agencies encourage creative and enterprise skills and there is exemplary use of links with other schools to support those pupils with a range of complex needs. The governing body has a clear picture of how to drive school improvement and offers

good support and challenge. The school's accurate self-evaluation and its success in sustaining high attainment demonstrate its good capacity to improve. It provides outstanding value for money.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further increase the rate at which pupils make progress, particularly in mathematics in Key Stage 2, by:
 - ensuring all lessons have appropriate pace and challenge, include probing questioning, and provide pupils with sufficient opportunities to solve problems and apply their skills in practical, exciting and investigative activities
 - ensuring that teachers give clear advice to pupils about how to improve their work and allow pupils opportunities to act upon that advice.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

The extent to which pupils achieve and enjoy their work is outstanding. Pupils are courteous, have excellent attitudes, form very positive relationships and show great keenness to do well in their work. In lessons, they especially enjoy challenging and lively activities, such as creating nets to explore shape and being encouraged to think about Venn diagrams. They relish being involved in role-play activities which give a context to their learning, for example, helping adventurers to cross an island or writing about how to trap a dragon. They thrive on the many opportunities to read and write independently. Pupils achieve well in science, art and design, drama, music, and in sport, humanities and French.

From starting points in the Nursery which are in line with those expected for their age, pupils' attainment by the end of Year 4 is well above that expected nationally. They make outstanding progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2. Progress in Key Stage 2, while good, is less rapid because pupils are offered too few opportunities in mathematics to apply their highly developed skills. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are extremely well cared for and supported in their learning and they make outstanding progress because their work challenges and engages them.

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. This is reflected in their enthusiastic involvement in physical education and the high take-up of healthy school meals. Pupils have a less well developed understanding of some practices which present a threat to a healthy life.

Pupils make a positive contribution to the school community through the school council which meets regularly, keeps meticulous minutes, and listens to pupils' concerns and ideas. They have planned improvements to the playground and encouraged more pupils to walk to school. They support a range of charities and participate in competitions with other local schools and in activities with the local

churches and in the local community. Pupils have high attainment, above average attendance, good understanding of the issues related to enterprise and the world of work and confident use of skills in information and communication technology. However, the development of those skills which prepare them for their future economic well-being remains good because opportunities are missed to allow pupils to research and apply their skills.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers make it clear to pupils what they will learn and how they will know if they have succeeded. They employ new technology well to engage pupils and to plan effective opportunities for pupils to learn through practical activities, including games. There are very strong relationships and teachers, and teaching assistants interact well with pupils to support them in their learning. In the best lessons, teachers use questions well to ascertain what pupils already know, extend their thinking and check that they have made progress. However, this is not the case in all lessons, especially in Key Stage 2. Occasionally, the pace of learning drops because introductory activities go on too long and pupils are prevented from getting on with tasks or exploring together. While marking is used well to tell pupils how well they have achieved in individual tasks, it is used less well to tell pupils how to improve their work and opportunities are sometimes missed for pupils to act upon that advice.

The curriculum contributes to pupils' outstanding progress by offering a range of stimulating activities. These help them to see the links between subjects and to develop and apply important skills, especially in writing and teamwork, although there are too few opportunities for them to apply their skills in mathematics. Work on the history of the cinema, 'From Hollywood to Bollywood' or about life in Kenya, successfully develops pupils' imagination, creativity and research skills and their understanding of life in other countries. There are highly effective procedures to encourage pupils' enthusiasm for reading and to offer opportunities for pupils to

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

write at length. Well-planned enrichment activities, including visits to residential centres and to theatres and cinemas, visits from religious groups and opportunities to work with artists, writers and sports coaches, all help to develop pupils' skills in sport and art and their understanding of environmental issues and different faiths and cultures. There are many popular extra-curricular clubs, which promote learning and enjoyment in sporting, arts and environmental activities, including gardening and cooking and sports.

This is a very caring school in which everyone looks out for each other and where all staff sensitively identify and support children and families who are potentially vulnerable owing to their circumstances. Accordingly, extremely effective strategies are put in place to help those pupils who have a range of complex learning, social and emotional needs. 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 and well-respected headteacher is extremely committed to sustaining the high attainment she has helped pupils to achieve, and to driving further improvement. Very ably supported by the new deputy headteacher and leaders at all levels, she has rigorously pursued and implemented strategies that ensure that pupils make outstanding progress. Robust use of data and lesson observations have been used to identify those areas which have fallen short of the excellence she demands. Accordingly, appropriate strategies have been employed to accelerate progress in mathematics in Key Stage 2, although these initiatives have not as yet become sufficiently embedded or adequately focused on developing opportunities for pupils to apply their skills. All staff have clearly defined roles and responsibilities and are enthusiastic about their contribution to the development of key areas of the curriculum. They welcome these opportunities to contribute to decision-making and to the very detailed school improvement plan and appreciate opportunities to advance their own professional development. The governing body offers good support and challenge to the school and employs effective procedures to monitor pupils' learning. These have had a strong impact on school effectiveness, although procedures to evaluate information about pupils' progress are less well-developed.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils are outstanding, as all aspects meet government requirements and are rigorously monitored and reviewed to ensure that they meet the highest standards of best practice to ensure pupils' safety. Excellent arrangements ensure that child protection procedures are of the highest quality. The school has introduced a range of very effective initiatives to involve

parents and carers in their children’s learning and to provide regular information about their children’s progress. It also has exceptionally effective links with outside agencies to support the pupils’ wide-ranging needs and to develop learning opportunities. There is an extremely effective 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 a good contribution to community cohesion. Pupils have a clear understanding of the United Kingdom as a diverse, multicultural society and of life in other countries. The sense of community in the school is strong and there are close links with the local community.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
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	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Highly effective teaching, by all adults, is skilfully directed to develop skills in counting, speaking and listening and linking sounds and letters, and helps children to make excellent progress from their starting points. The outstanding leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage manager has ensured that there is excellent teamwork and very effective planning which is based on observations of children’s skills and abilities. She provides a clear model for excellent teaching and shares her imaginative vision with the staff team and this supports continued improvements. All staff offer children many challenging activities both indoors and outdoors, including in the school’s woodland area, in a stimulating and exceptionally caring environment. Accordingly, children respond by becoming extremely caring and confident individuals and they flourish as they are engaged in creative activities, such as construction and imaginative play. They particularly enjoy role play activities, such as creating their own cinema or defending a castle with knights on horseback. They enjoy cooking Christmas biscuits and exercising on the climbing frame and tricycles. There is a clear focus on developing children’s writing skills and activities in all areas of learning are very clearly matched to learning goals.

A range of healthy snacks and drinking water, opportunities for exercise and clear guidelines for hand washing, help children to develop an excellent understanding of how to stay healthy. Staff ensure that requirements regarding children’s safety are rigorously met. There are extremely effective partnerships with parents and carers that enable children to settle quickly into the Nursery class and allow parents and

carers to understand how well their children are progressing, especially through the children's learning journals.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation stage	1
Taking into account:	1
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

Approximately two fifths of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire, which is more than typical nationally. The respondents strongly support the school and its leaders and how they meet their child's needs, ensuring their child enjoys school, is healthy and safe. There was no general pattern to concerns raised by parents and carers. Each individual issue was discussed with the school and investigated thoroughly by inspectors. Their findings form part of the evidence in reaching the judgements contained in the report.

A few respondents commented about the way some parents and carers endanger pupils' safety by ignoring the school's request not to park outside the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ponteland 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 inspection team received 132 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 339 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	104	79	28	21	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	104	79	28	21	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	79	60	52	39	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	78	59	52	39	2	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	90	68	41	31	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	87	66	43	33	2	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	88	67	41	31	0	0	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)	83	63	42	32	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	79	60	47	36	3	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	69	52	54	41	5	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	69	52	58	44	2	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	93	70	37	28	1	1	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	99	75	32	24	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.



30 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ponteland First School, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE20 9QB

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

You go to a good school which has many outstanding features, and your teachers know how to make it even better. We were very impressed by the high standards you achieve in your work and your exceptional behaviour and politeness. You have great care and respect for one another and for those less fortunate than yourselves, especially your friends in Kenya. We admired your good understanding of how to stay healthy and your knowledge about life in other countries. We also enjoyed your singing and acting. Your teachers take outstanding care of you. 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. Your parents and carers like the school very much. Your teachers have agreed with me that they should continue to do the following things to help your school to improve even more.

- To help you to make more rapid progress in mathematics in Key Stage 2, by ensuring all lessons are lively and make you think hard by including probing questioning and sufficient opportunities for you to solve problems and apply your skills in practical, exciting and investigative activities.
- To make sure that they tell you how to improve your work and give you opportunities to act upon that advice.

You can all help by continuing to do your best. We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Gordon Potter
Lead Inspector

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