

Morpeth Stobhillgate First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122246
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	395393
Inspection dates	25–26 April 2012
Lead inspector	Alison Thomson

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	163
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Adrienne Stoner
Headteacher	Neil Richmond
Date of previous school inspection	20–21 May 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

Alison Thomson
Peter Bannon

Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed six teachers teaching 15 lessons, of which two were joint observations: one with the headteacher and one with the deputy headteacher. Meetings were held with the chair of governors, school leaders and pupils. The inspectors observed the school's work, including analyses of the pupils' work, and looked at a number of documents, including those relating to safeguarding and child protection and development planning, the monitoring of the quality of teaching and external views of the school. The inspectors also analysed 90 parental and carers' questionnaires, 103 pupils' questionnaires and 17 questionnaires completed by the staff.

Information about the school

This school is average in size for a school of this type. The proportion of children known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than average. Most pupils are White British and only a small number speak English as an additional language. A smaller than average proportion of pupils is disabled or has special educational needs, although the proportion that has a statement of special educational needs is average. The school has many awards, including Healthy School status for the promotion of a healthy lifestyle. The school meets the current government floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

Separate childcare provision shares the school site. This is not managed by the governing body and was not included in this inspection but a report of its quality can be found on the Ofsted website.

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	1
Achievement of pupils	1
Quality of teaching	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	1

Key Findings

- Morpeth Stobhill is an outstanding school. Parents and carers, pupils and staff are all extremely positive about all aspects of the school and many comments, such as the following one, illustrate this; 'My daughter has loved her time at this school. She is always so excited about the different topics – a great way to learn! I am really proud of her achievements.' The effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding.
- Pupils' achievement is outstanding. From starting points that are generally below age-related expectations on entry to the Nursery, pupils make outstanding progress and leave in Year 4 with attainment that is typically above the national average.
- Teaching is outstanding. Along with an exciting curriculum that enthuses pupils, it helps them to make rapid progress. In the majority of lessons teachers share with pupils clear criteria for success so they can tell how well they are doing and they encourage pupils to reflect on how well they are learning. However, in a few lessons this does not happen as effectively as it might do. This means that learning and progress are not always maximised.
- Behaviour is outstanding. Pupils say they feel extremely safe in school and are very active in promoting safety. They enjoy school immensely. Pupils say that misbehaviour is uncommon and any that occurs is dealt with very effectively by the school. Attendance is above average.
- Leadership and management at all levels, including governance, are outstanding. There is very successful leadership of teaching and management of performance. The staff are very committed and ambitious for the pupils. Both the curriculum and the promotion of the pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development are outstanding. This creates a very happy, vibrant and purposeful learning environment.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Maximise learning and progress in all lessons by:
 - always sharing with pupils clear criteria for success so they can tell how well they are doing
 - encouraging the pupils to reflect on how well they are learning.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils enjoy lessons. Most are exceptionally hardworking and keen to give of their best. They respond well to excellent teaching that stimulates their learning. They enjoy being actively involved in finding things out for themselves and respond positively to challenging activities. For example, children in Reception who were exploring outdoors to find 'minibeasts' were hugely interested in following the antics of a large snail leaving a slime trail, asking many pertinent questions about its habits. Pupils in Year 4 were seen in a mathematics lesson using their recently acquired knowledge of the eight compass points to solve practical problems in the yard. They rose eagerly to the challenge and made outstanding progress as a result. Children make outstanding progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, from generally below expected starting points. By the end of Reception many children enter Year 1 having reached above expected levels in most areas of development. This outstanding progress continues throughout the main school. Attainment in reading by the end of Key Stage 1 is consistently above average and by the time pupils leave school it is much higher than expected. Listening to pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 read confirmed that their attainment in reading is above average and sometimes high. Attainment overall in English and mathematics at the end of Year 4 is above that expected.

Pupils make outstanding progress and achieve very well as they move up through the school because leaders and managers have been successful in ensuring that the quality of teaching is outstanding overall and never less than good. Initiatives, such as a curriculum that is highly creative, have captured the interests of the pupils well. Who would not be excited at designing clothes to go to the Antarctic or exploring the story of the 1066 Norman Invasion through a video link to the Bayeux Tapestry? Such projects allow pupils to successfully apply their highly-honed basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology to enhance their learning. All pupils, including disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and also those who speak English as an additional language, make outstanding progress. This is because the school identifies their needs early and accurately and provides effective support, both in the classroom and in small group and one-to-one activities. The vast majority of parents and carers are of the opinion that their children are making good progress and that the school meets their needs.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is excellent and teachers are most enthusiastic. They plan their lessons with work that is matched very well to the different needs of the pupils. Teaching assistants very effectively support pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs by carefully adapting the work and by providing visual stimuli for them. This is also true of pupils who speak English as an additional language. For example, in the Nursery, duck

finger-puppets were used to assist with counting. The more-able pupils are well catered for, too, with activities that provide additional challenges, such as Year 1 using coins to find as many ways as possible of making up 25p. Many lessons are taught as whole school topics, such as the Frozen Planet, and pupils' work is displayed in very imaginative ways. It is a treat, for example, to see the 'outside inside museum' walkway displaying the pupils' artwork and writing. This celebration of pupils' work generates a real sense of achievement and buzz amongst the pupils and many of them told the inspectors what 'fun' their lessons are. Parents and carers told us that too, and they strongly agreed that their children are well taught.

There are many opportunities for pupils to practise their basic skills. For example, Year 2 pupils were seen using virtual scales on a computer program to reinforce their knowledge of the meaning of the 'equals' symbol. Pupils gain confidence well because they are given many opportunities to voice opinions, share ideas and, in many lessons, to help assess their own learning, all of which contribute very effectively to their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This was exemplified well in a Year 3 design and technology lesson on healthy eating where pupils successfully cooperated with each other to design healthy snacks. Teachers mark the pupils' work thoroughly, particularly so in literacy. As well as correcting mistakes and giving praise, there are many comments to help pupils know how they can improve their work, through the regular use of 'next steps in your learning'. There are, however, a few lessons in which pupils are not given sufficiently clear indicators to tell how well they are doing or enough opportunities to reflect on their learning. In these lessons learning and progress are not as high quality as they could be.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils behave exceptionally well and enjoy school enormously. This was most evident throughout the inspection and is supported by the parents' and carers' questionnaire. One commented, 'My son doesn't like weekends and holidays when he can't go to school.' Pupils are extremely polite to adults and highly respectful of each other and their school surroundings. Exemplary behaviour was evident in most lessons observed during the inspection and around the school. The inspectors talked to many pupils during lessons and at break times and more formally in discussions with groups of pupils. They told the inspectors that they feel exceptionally safe and know that the Year 4 Rainbows, as well as the teachers and other adults in school, will help with any problems if they arise. They say that bullying in any form hardly ever occurs. Pupils particularly appreciate the merit praise system, which encourages them to behave well, work hard and develop teamwork and social skills. The older pupils confirmed that behaviour is 'really good' and has been so for as long as they can remember. Attendance is above average. The school council works very hard on behalf of other pupils. Its members are particularly proud of the actions they have initiated to improve aspects of school life, such as promoting safety in the playground by risk assessing areas for different activities.

Leadership and management

The headteacher, who is held in very high esteem, makes sure that all the talents of the staff are recognised and developed for the benefit of the pupils. He instils confidence in his staff and pupils. He is very ably assisted by his senior leadership team and by the middle leaders who monitor and evaluate well individuals' progress in their areas. The staff questionnaires showed that all members of staff are very positive about all aspects of the school. There were many comments, such as, 'A vibrant, happy place to work.', 'Lots of

opportunities for professional development.’ and ‘Coming to work is a joy.’ that exemplify just how happy they are. The drive for improvement and love of teaching the pupils was palpable during the inspection. Pupil progress is monitored rigorously and in a timely fashion, meaning that any underachievement is picked up and addressed very early. Equality of opportunity is outstanding, with all groups of pupils making outstanding progress. Racism and poor behaviour are not tolerated at all. Governance is outstanding. Members of the governing body challenge the school well and are fully involved in moving it forward. They not only monitor and evaluate the performance of the school thoroughly, but also their own performance. Safeguarding meets current statutory requirements well, with the pupils themselves involved in risk assessments.

The school engages with the parents and carers extremely well. There was a high return with the parents’ and carers’ questionnaire. These showed that they were most positive with all aspects of the school. All of those who returned the questionnaire agreed or strongly agreed that the school responds to any concerns they have. Many went on to add comments saying just how pleased they are with their children’s experience at the school. Since the previous inspection, in response to highly effective professional development and performance management, there have been many significant improvements. Attendance has improved. Progress in all areas has improved, helped greatly by the outstanding, innovative curriculum that provides pupils with many memorable and exciting experiences. Teaching is continually improving with many more outstanding lessons occurring. The wide variety of such positive experiences, including the outstanding provision for the pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the many improvements, indicate that the capacity for future improvement is outstanding.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



27 April 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Morpeth Stobhillgate First School, Morpeth, NE61 2HA

Thank you for being so polite, welcoming and friendly when the inspectors visited your school recently. The purpose of our visit was to find out how well you do in your work and what can be improved. We enjoyed our time at Stobhillgate, particularly the time spent talking to you about your school, learning and behaviour. Your views are very important and we have taken them into account when making our judgements.

Yours is an outstanding school. We were pleased by your excellent behaviour and attitudes to work, which help you to make outstanding progress in your learning and to reach above expected standards by the end of Year 4. You told us that bullying is rare, that you feel very safe and that it is a friendly school. Teaching is mainly outstanding and you told us that your teachers make your learning fun because there are a lot of exciting topics, such as the Frozen Planet. Your school is very well led by your headteacher and the governing body and all staff do a great job in looking after you.

Even though we judged your school to be outstanding it could be even better. We have asked your headteacher to make sure that you learn as well as you can in all your lessons. We would like all your teachers always to make very clear to you how you can tell if you are working well. We would also like all your teachers to give you time to think carefully about how well you are learning. You can help by checking with your teachers if you are not able to tell easily how well you are doing in any lessons.

We loved all the exciting displays of your work around the school. Keep producing such interesting work!

Yours sincerely

Alison Thomson
Lead inspector

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