

Heddon-on-the-Wall, St Andrew's Church of England First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122275
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	380440
Inspection dates	22–23 May 2012
Lead inspector	Derek Neil

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	143
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Wilson
Headteacher	Andrew Wheatley
Date of previous school inspection	19 May 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

Derek Neil

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed teaching and learning in nine lessons or parts of lessons, taught by seven teachers. These included a joint observation with the headteacher. He held meetings with pupils; with three members of the governing body, including the Chair of the Governing Body and with school staff, including senior and middle managers. He also had informal discussions with some parents and carers. He observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents including the school development plan and assessment information. He analysed 35 parental questionnaires.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than most primary schools. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is low. Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher, senior leadership team and Chair of the Governing Body have been appointed. An on-site before- and after-school club is run by a private provider and is inspected separately by Ofsted.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- St Andrew's is a good school. Parents and carers are very happy to send their children there. They appreciate its welcoming and friendly atmosphere and the care staff take to promote pupils' good academic progress and effective personal development. Outstanding features include the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, the imaginative curriculum, and the meticulous way that pupils' progress is assessed and monitored. The school aims for excellence but is not yet outstanding because of some shortcomings in the teaching and in pupils' achievement in literacy.
- Attainment is above average. Pupils make good progress. They have positive attitudes to learning, enjoy being in school and achieve well. Nonetheless, some of the younger pupils, mainly boys, find reading difficult and pupils' written work is sometimes marred by immature handwriting and technical errors.
- The new leadership team has inspired continuous improvements in the quality of teaching. Lessons are characterised by their efficient organisation, their varied and interesting activities, and the ingenious ways in which different subjects are linked together. Occasionally, teachers do not explain the work clearly enough and pupils' progress slows.
- Pupils behave well and are safe in school. They have positive attitudes to learning. Pupils are courteous and confident when speaking to adults and for the most part show each other respect and friendship. They report that there is very little bullying.
- Leadership and management are good. The school has improved markedly since its previous inspection. The headteacher leads a committed and enthusiastic staff effectively and manages their performance well.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to raise attainment in literacy by:
 - improving the reading skills of the less-able, younger boys
 - organising the support of parents and carers so that pupils are heard reading more frequently
 - paying more attention throughout the school to handwriting, spelling, and punctuation.
- Further improve the quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring that all pupils participate actively in lessons at all times
 - explaining concepts and tasks clearly and accurately
 - helping pupils to learn from errors in their written work.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils achieve well and parents and carers recognise this. From starting points that are broadly expected for age when they enter the school, pupils reach expected attainment by the end of Year 4. They make outstanding progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, particularly in their love of learning, in their social development and in their creative skills. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, then make good progress over Key Stages 1 and 2. Overall attainment in reading is slightly above average at the end of Year 2, but this masks a difference between the boys and the girls. Since the previous inspection, boys' attainment in literacy, including reading, has risen and is now above expectations by the end of Year 4, but in Key Stage 1 it remains below average, largely because of the difficulties some boys have with reading. They know some basic phonics (the sounds that letters make) but lack the skills to make sense of quite simple texts. For example, they struggle with words such as, 'and', 'went' and 'flour'. The headteacher is aware of the issue and has introduced several changes in this part of the school, but they have yet to make a clear impact on attainment. By the end of Year 4, pupils read with confidence and enjoyment; many can talk about their favourite authors and genres. Their writing shows imagination and increasing sophistication in the way they construct sentences. However, some pupils' handwriting is immature and their work is often spoiled by inaccurate spelling and punctuation. For example, even able pupils misspell common words such as 'exciting', 'being' and 'useful'.

In lessons pupils work well. They pay attention to the teacher, enjoy the work, and are keen to volunteer answers. They are frequently excited by the lesson's content because of the imagination and enthusiasm of the teacher. In a session in the Early Years Foundation Stage, for example, children were agog when they saw that the beans they had planted the previous day had sprouted overnight into an enormous beanstalk; and were fascinated by glimpses through a keyhole of the scene they might find at the top. Such approaches contribute to pupils' enjoyment of learning and their active imaginations. Occasionally, pupils' learning slows when the work is not explained clearly or when it does not capture their imagination.

Quality of teaching

Most of the teaching is good, and some lessons are outstanding. Parents, carers and pupils confirm this. Relationships between pupils and staff are very good. Teachers build up pupils' confidence with praise and encouragement. Pupils with special educational needs get well-targeted support in lessons, and occasionally in short individual sessions outside lessons, to help them make good progress. Lessons often link different subjects; this helps pupils learn because they develop their skills and understanding in meaningful contexts. For example, one class studying a topic about travel to Brazil learned about inverse operations in mathematics by considering how travellers exchange currency from sterling to the real and then back again. Teachers prepare very interesting lessons designed to capture pupils' imagination, stimulate their creativity and motivate them to work hard. For example, before writing a poem about the rainforest pupils explored a variety of materials intended to excite each of their senses. Pupils work through a series of briskly paced activities; movements between these tasks are carried out efficiently because of teachers' excellent organisation. In the best lessons pupils actively participate at all times, including those periods when the teacher is leading the session with the whole class. This does not always occur, however, and sometimes pupils lose interest if they are kept listening to the teacher or their classmates for too long. Occasionally, the teacher does not explain a new concept or a task clearly, accurately or interestingly and consequently pupils do not make good progress. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly; they make it clear what pupils need to do to succeed in a task. However, they often fail to point out technical errors in pupils' writing or to make sure pupils learn from their mistakes. Particularly strong teaching and support and accurate assessment, promote the outstanding outcomes and provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Teaching contributes considerably to pupils' personal development. In a lesson on perseverance, for example, the teacher stressed the importance of not giving up in the face of adversity. Reading is taught well and the school is developing this area of its work with those pupils who are struggling. However, some pupils get too few opportunities to read aloud to an adult at home and this slows their progress.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour is good, as parents, carers and the majority of pupils confirm. Exclusions and racist incidents are almost unknown. Pupils behave well in class, and children's conduct is an outstanding feature of their social development in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Apart from a tiny minority whose attention wavers when they are bored or tired, pupils work hard and their conduct does not disrupt the learning. Outside lessons, behaviour is just as good. Pupils are very sociable and interact well with others of all age groups. Pupils are comfortable and confident talking to adults. The great majority feel safe in school, and all parents and carers concur. The site is secure and staff supervise pupils closely throughout the day. Pupils are aware of different types of bullying, which are rare and with which the school deals effectively. Name-calling is of a minor nature and disputes are quickly settled. Attendance, average at the time of the last inspection, has improved to above average and is still rising. At the start of the day and after playtime pupils are punctual to class.

Leadership and management

Leaders monitor and evaluate the school's performance very effectively, using an extensive range of assessment data and direct observation of the school at work. They have accurately identified areas to improve and planned suitable actions to deal with these. The headteacher's management of staff's performance, including perceptive observations of their lessons, has led to improvements in the quality of teaching and in the leadership skills of senior and middle managers. The governing body is highly effective in the support and challenge it provides. Given the great strides the school has made since the previous inspection, leaders' accurate knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses, and staff's strong commitment to maintain high standards, there is a good capacity to improve.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It is organised flexibly to meet individual pupils' needs and accelerate the progress they make. For example, pupils who would benefit from working in a different class are given that opportunity. Less-able pupils receive brief sessions of individual support designed to consolidate their skills in precisely identified aspects of literacy or numeracy. The curriculum is constructed with imagination and flair, particularly in the way it ignites pupils' creativity, in the way it provides opportunities for pupils to learn outdoors, and in the way it builds meaningful links between subjects, thus providing all pupils equally with opportunities to develop their skills and understanding in different contexts. The school does not tolerate discrimination in any form. Pupils work and play harmoniously. Communications with parents and carers have been strengthened using new technologies, but some parents and carers believe, and the school agrees, that there is further work to do, particularly in helping them to support their child's learning at home. The school's arrangements for keeping pupils safe meet requirements; rigorous auditing by the governing body ensures that every detail of the school's policy is scrupulously observed.

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.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
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.



24 May 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Heddon-on-the-Wall, St Andrew's Church of England First School, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE15 0BJ

Thank you for welcoming me so warmly into your school when I visited recently. I enjoyed watching you in lessons and at play, talking about your school with you and your teachers, and looking at your work. Now I want to share with you what I found.

You go to a good school. It has many strong points. Staff take good care of you; I understand why you say you feel safe there. You behave well and work hard. The teachers give you very interesting activities in lessons. This not only makes the lessons enjoyable but also helps you to make good progress, with children in the Early Years Foundation Stage doing particularly well. The staff keep a close eye on your work so that they know when you need extra help or when to give you more difficult tasks. You told me you enjoy coming to school; this was most evident on those two sunny days when I watched you playing happily together on that lovely school field.

There are a few things that would make the school better. I have asked the staff to help you to improve some aspects of your writing and reading. I have also suggested some ways that would make some of your lessons even more enjoyable. You can help your teachers to help you by being careful not to make spelling and punctuation mistakes, by writing as neatly as you can, and by learning from any errors the teacher points out to you. Some of you would also benefit from reading as much as possible, especially at home.

Thank you again for helping me so much. It was a pleasure to meet you. I wish all of you the very best.

Yours sincerely

Derek Neil
Lead Inspector

