

INSPECTION REPORT

VANE ROAD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Newton Aycliffe, Co. Durham.

LEA area: Durham

Unique reference number: 114206

Head teacher: Mrs. S.J. Collier

Reporting inspector: Mrs. P. Cass
[Rgl's OIN - 1561]

Dates of inspection: 7th to 9th February 2000

Inspection number: 35877

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Junior

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 4 to 11 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Vane Road,
Newton Aycliffe,
Co. Durham.

Postcode: DL5 5RH

Telephone number: 01325 300380

Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs. G.A. Gibson

Date of previous inspection: 4th December 1995

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	
Mrs. P. Cass	Registered inspector
Mrs. V.A. Lamb	Lay inspector
Mr. P. Smith	Team inspector

The inspection contractor was:

Durham Local Education Authority

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is situated in the town of Newton Aycliffe in the south east of County Durham. It is larger than the average sized primary school with 377 pupils on roll. The school was amalgamated from adjacent infant and junior schools and still operates in separate buildings. Pupils' attainment on entry is broadly average.

The school serves the immediate area and pupils come from a mixture of local authority housing and privately owned houses. There are currently 14% of pupils entitled to free school meals, which is broadly average. The percentage of pupils with statements of special educational needs is also about average. There are no pupils for whom English is a second language.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school with some very good features. It is a lively community where pupils achieve good standards. The quality of teaching is always satisfactory and frequently good or very good. The head teacher and governors work closely together in pursuit of the school's aims. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils achieve high standards in English and mathematics.
- Teaching is good overall.
- The head teacher and staff create and maintain good conditions for learning.
- Pupils' attitudes to school are good and their behaviour is very good.
- Governors take an active role in the school.
- Provide good opportunities for extra-curricular activities, particularly at Key Stage 2.

What could be improved

- Monitoring and evaluating the work of the school.
- Communication with parents.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in December 1995. Since then it has successfully addressed all the key issues identified at the time of the last inspection. The school has provided more challenge for able pupils particularly in literacy and numeracy. Standards in music have improved and the subject is now an important feature of school life. Teachers' planning is now good and the implementation of the daily numeracy lesson has provided more opportunities for investigation and problem solving.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
English	C	B	B	B	well above average A
mathematics	B	B	B	B	above average B
science	B	B	B	B	average C
					below average D
					well below average E

Comparison with similar schools is based on a free school meals entitlement of between 8% and 20%. The above table shows that pupils' attainment in English, mathematics and science was above average when compared with all schools and with similar schools. The trend in the school's results over time in all the core subjects is broadly in line with those achieved nationally. The school has set appropriately challenging targets and is on line to achieve them. The target set in English for 1999 was exceeded but the school did not achieve the expected target for mathematics. Pupils enter school with broadly average attainment but at the end of both key stages their attainment is above average. From the scrutiny of pupils' work and lessons observed in English and mathematics pupils' attainment is above average.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes to school are very good. They enjoy coming to school and are enthusiastic learners.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils' behaviour is very good and this has a positive effect on their learning.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are very good. Pupils' personal development is good, they are willing to have a go and learn from others. However, not enough opportunities are available for the youngest and oldest pupils to be together.
Attendance	Good.

Pupils move about the school in an orderly and sensible way. In lessons they quickly organise their materials and settle to their work, which has a positive effect on their learning.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Satisfactory	Good	Good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

As this was a short inspection, not all teachers were observed. Overall the teaching in English and mathematics is good and sometimes very good at both key stages. Teachers create a good climate for learning; they have high expectations and are clear about what they want pupils to learn although they do not always share these objectives with the pupils. In teaching literacy and numeracy teachers have good subject knowledge and encourage the use of technical language to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding. This could be further enhanced by effective use of display to support pupils' learning. Teachers do not always make good enough use of the time available when pupils are working independently or in groups. They should be taking the opportunity to teach and give intensive support to a group.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum with an appropriate emphasis on numeracy and literacy. The curriculum is supported by a good range of extra-curricular activities, particularly at Key Stage 2.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	There is a good system in place that enables teachers and support staff to plan together for pupils with special educational needs. However, individual education plans are not focussed enough to make it clear what pupils have to do to improve.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. The school places an appropriate emphasis on all aspects of pupils' personal development. Time is provided for reflection and to consider the views of others in collective worship and in lessons. The head teacher takes every opportunity to involve pupils and their music in the community.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The head teacher and staff know the pupils well. There are good procedures to promote pupils' well-being and safety. A close working arrangement with neighbouring schools ensures that pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

High priority is given to developing pupils' basic skills across the curriculum in such subjects as R.E, science and geography. The school makes good use of resources from within and outside the school to enrich the curriculum. The planned curriculum meets the needs of all pupils.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	The head teacher and senior management team share a common purpose to maintain high standards and to make their work more effective. Within the management structure staff with responsibilities are clear about their roles in the school and fulfil these responsibilities well.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors fulfil their responsibilities well and have established systematic procedures for gathering information on the provision in all areas of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has put systems in place to evaluate its performance but these are in the early stages.
The strategic use of resources	Educational priorities are well supported through careful financial planning. There is insufficient clerical support for a school of this size and too much of the head teacher's time is given to routine administration rather than to systematically monitoring the work of the school.

The governors are aware of best value principles. They take an interest in the performance of the school and the way it is perceived locally. Comparisons are made with other schools and when making major purchases the school ensures it gets value for money.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of teaching. • The school is approachable. • The school expects the best of pupils • Behaviour is good. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The information they receive about their children's progress and the quality of written reports. • The information they receive about what is to be taught.

The inspection team fully agrees with parents' positive views of the school but also recognises that there are areas to be improved. The school does not give parents enough information about what is to be taught so that they can support their children's learning. The inspectors agree that the quality of written reports is unsatisfactory. Although the information about progress in English Mathematics and science is satisfactory parents do not have a clear view of progress made in other subjects. Concern was expressed at the parents' meeting about year 2 pupils in a mixed year 2 and year 3 class. Inspectors do not share parents' concerns that pupils in the mixed key stage class are disadvantaged either in the curriculum they are being offered or the standards they are achieving.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Pupils achieve high standards in English and mathematics

1. In the national tests at 7 and 11 pupils' standards in English and mathematics are above average. These high standards have been maintained over the past three years with the rate of improvement mirroring the national trend. Standards in English and mathematics are good when compared with the national average and when compared with standards in similar schools. The profile of pupils' ability on entering school is broadly average and therefore the good standards achieved at the end of each key stage indicate that the school makes a significant improvement to children's achievement and learning.
2. The high standards, which are achieved particularly in English and mathematics, are attributable to several factors. All that the school does contributes to improved standards. However, there are three significant factors, which make the most contribution to the high standards, namely good quality teaching and the pupils' attitudes to their learning.
3. So what is it about teaching which makes such a difference?
4. The school helps its pupils to improve their standards and achieve their potential through a number of significant contributions to their learning. Significantly the quality of teaching and pupils' attitudes play a very important role. The main features of the good teaching seen are that teachers:
 - have high expectations of the pupils;
 - expect good quality work;
 - expect a good quantity of work;
 - are clear about what they want pupils to learn;
 - have good subject knowledge;
 - plan carefully and in detail;
 - scrutinise pupils' work across the school to make sure that pupils are progressing in their learning and that there are no gaps;and in respect of pupils' attitudes the key features are that they:
 - have a good work ethic;
 - pay good attention to their teachers;
 - listen attentively;
 - behave well;
 - work well together.
5. There are also whole school factors, which contribute to these good standards. The head teacher and governors:
 - make a thorough analysis of the available data so that they can identify areas where pupils could do better;
 - check that the school is maintaining its good standards when compared with similar schools.

6. Another and most significant factor is that boys in this school achieve much better than is seen nationally. This is largely due to the positive efforts made in the school to encourage boys to achieve. One such effort is the recent planned introduction of texts and other materials that are designed to have a particular interest to boys.
7. In the previous inspection the school was criticised for not giving enough challenge to more able pupils. This situation has been successfully addressed by teachers using techniques which ensure that there is good challenge for the more able pupils.

Teaching is good overall

8. The teaching of English and mathematics is good and sometimes very good. Teachers create a good climate for learning; pupils are clear about their teachers' expectations and respond well to them. Although teachers' planning is full and thorough and they are clear about what they want their pupils to learn they do not always share the purpose of the lesson with them. In literacy and numeracy lessons particularly, teachers have good subject knowledge and they encourage the use of technical language to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding.
9. Monitoring of teachers' work by the literacy co-ordinator has contributed to the good standards of teaching in literacy. The school wisely uses the co-ordinator's expertise to support teachers' planning and their practice in the classroom. Teachers are very positive and professional about their work and are keen to get better. During the course of the inspection it became very clear that teachers responded well to feedback, particularly where areas for improvement were identified. Indeed some teachers responded to these immediately.

The head teacher and staff create and maintain good conditions for learning

10. Relationships in the school are good. The head teacher and staff know the pupils well. Although this is a large primary school the head teacher knows pupils by name and talks to them about their families and how they are getting on. The importance attached to this was also clear by the effort that the newly appointed deputy head teacher is making to learn all the children's names.
11. The school has put in place systems to monitor the curriculum and teaching but these are still in the early stages. The work that has begun is thorough in English but in the early stages of implementation in mathematics.
12. Good systems have been put in place to ensure that learning support staff and classroom teachers have quality time in which to discuss pupils with special educational needs. However, pupils' individual educational plans are not focussed enough to make it absolutely clear what pupils need to do to improve.
13. The school places an appropriately heavy emphasis on all aspects of pupil's personal development. Time is given in lessons and assembly for reflection and to consider the views of others. Pupils' confidence and experience is developed through excellent links with the community when the choir performs to a range of audiences in a wide variety of settings.

14. Within the school staff with management responsibilities are clear about their roles and good structures are in place to involve all staff in the decision making process. The senior management team and teams at all levels across the school are used to ensure that teachers are involved and have an opportunity to contribute to the decision making processes. A particular strength is the organisation which involves Key Stage 1 teachers in covering for Key Stage 2 teachers so that team meetings can take place which ensures that teachers' planning and whole-school approaches are in place.

Pupils' attitudes to school are good and their behaviour is very good

15. Pupils are diligent and display purposeful attitudes to school that have a positive effect on their learning. Pupils' views have been canvassed through a questionnaire that asked about their attitudes to school, how they perceived their teachers and whether or not they felt safe in school. The response to this was overwhelmingly positive and helped to give pupils the message that their views are important and will be listened to and where possible acted upon. The questionnaire indicated that pupils enjoy coming to school. Relationships in classrooms are good and pupils are enthusiastic learners who are willing to have a go. When given the opportunity they enjoy working together and are able to organise themselves and their resources.
16. Pupils move about the school in a sensible and orderly way. This is particularly evident at lunch times when a large number of pupils are together waiting for their meal. Although the dining room is small, pupils wait patiently and are well behaved.
17. Parents support the school and share the same aspirations for their children as the school
18. An already good situation could be improved by providing more opportunities for the youngest and oldest pupils to be together.

Governors take an active role in the life of the school

19. The head teacher and governors have successfully addressed the key issues identified in the last inspection. Following the curriculum criticism about music from the last inspection there has been a conscious effort to provide training and to make appointments that would improve standards in music. This has proved to be very effective so that standards in music and musical opportunities given to pupils are now good.
20. Governors fulfil their responsibilities well and have established systematic procedures for gathering information about the school. They are a well motivated group of people led by a dedicated chair of governors who knows the school well and who has the best interests of the children, their parents and the community at the heart of her work. Governors have taken advantage of opportunities to attend training to develop and enhance their understanding of their role. They operate through a good committee structure. There are good arrangements in place for governors to be involved in the curriculum of the school. They meet regularly with subject co-ordinators and are given presentations on current issues of relevance to the school by members of staff. Governors maintain a good overview of the financial position of the school. Careful financial planning supports identified educational priorities and governors monitor the cost-effectiveness of their spending decisions. However, there is insufficient clerical support in a school of this size so that the head teacher has to

devote too much of her own time to routine administration rather than to monitoring the work of the school.

Good opportunities for extra-curricular activities, particularly at Key Stage 2

21. The school's broad and balanced curriculum is further enhanced by a good variety of extra curricular activities that are provided for pupils, particularly the older pupils. The under-8s football team had the wonderful opportunity to play at Sunderland Football Club's Stadium of Light, an exciting and motivating addition to their extra-curriculum football. As well as sport there are also very good opportunities for most pupils to be involved in a choir and recorders. During the winter months the school wisely holds these extra sessions in the lunch hour so that pupils will not be walking home in the dark. These activities are further extended by art and dancing clubs.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Monitoring and evaluating the work of the school

22. The school is in the early stages of monitoring teaching. This needs to be expanded and used more effectively to identify good practice. This can then be shared and used to improve teaching in the school so that all teaching is of the same standard as the best.
23. The arrangements for monitoring the progress made by pupils with SEN, and in particular of the quality of individual education plans, need to be improved and made clearer so that teachers can operate them more effectively. Targets that have been set for individual pupils are not sufficiently focussed and clear so that teachers will know what a child needs to do to get better. A good example of a target giving insufficient information is one which identifies the need for a pupil's listening skills to be improved. There is no clarification of when and how this might be done or the steps needed so that improvements can be registered, both by the class teacher and learning support staff.

Communication with parents

24. Parents are justified in their criticism of the school for late notification of class teacher arrangements. The school needs to set up an effective system to ensure that parents are kept well informed. There is not enough information given to parents about what is to be taught so that they can support their children's learning
25. The previous year's school reports, which were sent to parents, were unsatisfactory. Although the information about progress in English, mathematics and science was satisfactory parents are not given a clear enough idea of progress in other subjects.
26. The practice of photo copying sections of the report and inserting individual pupils' names into gaps is unacceptable.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

27. Improve the arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. Particular attention should be given to:
- Targets for pupils with SEN are more focussed;
 - Arrangements are more clear and easier to understand and implement by staff;
 - Identify and share best practice in the school to further improve the quality of teaching.
28. Improve communication with parents so that they can:
- Make more effective contributions to their children's learning;
 - Have a clearer overview of how their children are progressing.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	23
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	18

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	17	48	35	0	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	0	381
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	49

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	54

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	17
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	10

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.4
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	0.4

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	27	29	56

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	24	24	27
	Girls	27	28	27
	Total	51	52	54
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	91 (96)	93 (96)	96 (92)
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	25	26	27
	Girls	25	25	26
	Total	50	51	53
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	89 (96)	91 (96)	95 (94)
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	29	31	60

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	23	19	25
	Girls	24	26	29
	Total	47	45	54
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	78 (72)	75 (79)	90 (88)
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	22	21	22
	Girls	25	24	27
	Total	47	45	49
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	78 (68)	75 (81)	82 (77)
	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (71)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	
Indian	
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
White	334
Any other minority ethnic group	

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	2	
Other minority ethnic groups		

This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	13
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	29.3:1
Average class size	25.7

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	65.6

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	0

Total number of education support staff	0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	0

Number of pupils per FTE adult	0
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999
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	£
Total income	509,172.00
Total expenditure	517,071.00
Expenditure per pupil	1,326.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	20,425.00
Balance carried forward to next year	12,526.00

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	381
Number of questionnaires returned	108

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	57	35	7	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	49	48	3	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	39	51	6	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	26	57	13	4	0
The teaching is good.	60	36	2	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	29	55	11	5	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	62	30	6	3	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	62	37	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	25	59	11	4	1
The school is well led and managed.	43	50	2	2	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	45	49	5	1	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	14	41	16	7	23