

INSPECTION REPORT

HARBOTTLE C of E FIRST SCHOOL

Morpeth, Northumberland

LEA area: Northumberland

Unique reference number: 122292

Headteacher: Mrs A Wright

Reporting inspector: Mr L Garner
25507

Dates of inspection: 11th – 12th March 2002

Inspection number: 197340

Short inspection carried out under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Voluntary Aided Church of England

School category: Voluntary aided

Age range of pupils: 3 to 9 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Harbottle
Morpeth
Northumberland

Postcode: NE65 7DG

Telephone number: 01669 650271

Fax number: 01669 650271

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs M Ward

Date of previous inspection: September 1997

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Harbottle Church of England First School is a very small school with 19 full-time pupils. The national average for primary schools is 226 pupils. A nursery unit is in the school for part of the week. This is a shared facility with a neighbouring school. Twelve children attend the unit for half the week. The nursery children move into one of the two schools at the beginning of the school year in which they become five. Most of the pupils who attend the school live outside the village and are transported to and from school in three taxis. Many pupils live in very small communities or on isolated farms.

The very small number of pupils on roll means that comparisons with national figures have to be treated with caution. One or two pupils entering or leaving during a school year could dramatically affect the statistics. However, at this time, the percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those identified as having special educational needs is below the national average. All pupils speak English as their first language. Pupils' attainment on joining the nursery or the reception class varies greatly from year to year, but over time is average for children of their age.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school with some outstanding features. All pupils achieve standards that are above those expected from their previous attainment. The majority of pupils are working at a higher standard than most pupils nationally. This is largely because of the way the school is very well led and the very good teaching the pupils experience. Pupils' excellent attitude to their school work and their very good behaviour means that they benefit very well from what the school provides and make very good progress in their work and personal development. The school's very good involvement with the local community, including parents, enriches pupils' educational experiences. Despite funding per pupil being well above the national average, given the location and the circumstances under which it operates, the school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- The very good leadership of the headteacher, well supported by a very effective governing body and the staff, means that the aims and values of the school are reflected in all aspects of school life and give a clear educational direction which leads to high achievement.
- Pupils are taught very well and achieve standards well above the national average at the end of Year 2. By the end of Year 4, when pupils leave school, standards are well above the national expectations.
- The excellent relationships, evident between all in school, mean that pupils have excellent attitudes to their work and behave very well.
- Pupils' personal development is well catered for because of the school's first-rate provision for social and moral development.
- The school works very well with the local community and other schools to enrich pupils' education and give them experience of working within larger communities.
- Parents have a high regard for the quality of education provided for their children and support the school very well.

What could be improved

- The provision the school makes for the education of pupils in the Foundation Stage (nursery and reception year).

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

The school has recognised the improvement needed for the provision for its youngest pupils.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in September 1997 and was given a positive report. There has been good improvement since then.

There were two issues for action identified in the last report. The first one asked the school to improve levels of attainment in information and communication technology. This has been done by training staff and using computers in most lessons. Standards now meet the expectations of the National Curriculum. The second issue asked that the planning and monitoring responsibilities of the school governing body be improved. This has been done and the governing body is now a very effective organisation. Governors are involved in all aspects of school life and contribute very well to the quality of education provided. This has been a very good improvement.

Improvement has also been seen in many other areas of school life. The attitudes of pupils to their work has improved from good to excellent and their behaviour from good to very good. Relationships between staff and pupils, and between pupils, are better than those reported previously, and they were good then! Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is now very good. The leadership of the school is also very good. The judgement about the value for money the school provides has moved from satisfactory to good.

STANDARDS

No comparisons are made with the National Curriculum tests and assessments (SATs) of other schools because of the small numbers on roll. However, it is clear that throughout the school pupils are achieving well. They are making good progress from their own starting points.

Standards in English and mathematics are generally high, and, for the pupils in Years 3 and 4, well above national expectations. This is because the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been implemented well. One teacher has taken responsibility for teaching each subject to all pupils. This means that teachers know all pupils well and can plan individual targets for each child as they move up the school. There is therefore no break in progress as pupils move up the school. All pupils are also taught science by one teacher and, again, standards are higher than those in most schools.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. Pupils enjoy coming to school and concentrate on their work very well.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils' behaviour in classrooms and the playground is of a high standard. The behaviour of pupils in Years 3 and 4 is usually exemplary.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. This is a real 'family' school. All adults in school relate well to pupils and each other and pupils respond well to this. All members of the school community are valued.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Similar to the national average. The reason why this is not better than average is that an increasing number of parents are taking children on holiday in term time.

Attitudes to work, personal development and relationships are outstanding and contribute greatly to the good progress that pupils make.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 4
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Very 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.

Judgements are based on the observation of lessons during inspection and the scrutiny of pupils' work. This scrutiny showed work of a quantity and quality which could only have been achieved by high quality teaching.

The key to the high quality teaching, and therefore pupils' effective learning, is the way individual needs are identified and addressed. Although teaching groups are small, they may include up to three year groups. Pupils normally start lessons together but soon move to small groups where tasks are geared to individual needs. This means that pupils are almost always working at a level that challenges them and enables them to make the best progress from their own starting points.

Teaching of the literacy and numeracy lessons is particularly strong. Teachers waste no time so that pupils gain maximum benefit from the sessions. Support staff are very well used and effective. The nursery nurse makes a very good contribution to pupils' learning in the nursery and voluntary helpers give good support in the other classes.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory in the Foundation Stage and good in Years 1 to 4. The Foundation Stage Curriculum is in place but at an early stage of implementation. The curriculum for Years 1 to 4 is enriched by a very good range of out-of-school activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The small number of pupils with special educational needs have clear educational plans, and, partly because of the small teaching groups, usually get good help during lessons.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall with many aspects of social and moral development outstanding.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares for its pupils very well. Academic developments are closely monitored and the school's ethos means that pupils are given very good guidance for their personal development.

The school, rightly, considers itself to be a focus for the community. Parents are considered, and consider themselves, to be an important part of the school community.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher is very clear about the type of school she wants and has the support of all the school community.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors fulfill their responsibilities very well. They are very well led by the chair of governors who makes a significant contribution to the quality of education provided. Governors make frequent visits to school giving good support to staff.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school evaluates its performance very well. The monitoring of learning and the monitoring of educational initiatives being particular strengths.
The strategic use of resources	The school manages its limited resources well. The principles of 'best value' are understood and applied well by the headteacher and governors.

A particular strength of the leadership of the school is the close link between staff and governors. This means that there is 'open' discussion in which all make significant contributions to the progress made by pupils.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are happy with the standards their children achieve, the way they are taught and how the school is managed. • They believe their children behave very well in school. • They think the school expects their children to work hard and, because of the school ethos, their children become more mature. • Parents feel they are welcomed into school and the school works closely with and lets them know how their children are progressing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A minority of parents would like the school to provide more activities after school.

The inspection team agrees with all the positive views of the parents. We consider the request for activities after school to be impractical because the majority of pupils leave school at 3.15 pm by taxi. The school makes a very good provision for activities outside lessons by organising a good range of visits and visitors to school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The very good leadership of the headteacher, well supported by a very effective governing body and the school staff, means that the aims and values of the school are reflected in all aspects of school life and give a clear educational direction which leads to high achievement.

1. The very good leadership and management of the headteacher has been the driving force behind the success of this school. She leads by example and has the support of the whole school community. One five-year-old writes, 'Mrs Wright teaches us and is very good at teaching, she looks after everybody'. The aims of the school that values each pupil as an individual are central to the teaching and learning that is provided.
2. The teaching staff support the headteacher very well. They are all employed in a part-time capacity and show a total commitment to the school and to the aim of high achievement of the pupils.
3. The governing body supports the school very well. Governors are involved in all aspects of school life and have become much more effective since the last inspection. This is largely because of the change in the way governors work with the school. The chair of governors sets the standards for her colleagues. She is closely involved in school life, makes frequent visits and knows children and their families well. All governors visit school and observe lessons and work very well with staff. One governor is the local vicar of the school's church and she has supported the school very well, not only by taking school assemblies but also by involving parents in the family services she holds in church.
4. The school has a relatively small budget because of its size but uses it well. It looks to obtain best value for money in all it does. The amount of money provided for each pupil each year is well above the national average. This is because of the small number of pupils. However, considering its isolated position, the high standards achieved and the very good ethos, the school gives good value for money.

Pupils are taught very well and achieve standards well above the national average at the end of Year 2. By the end of Year 4, when children leave school, standards are well above the national expectations.

5. The quality of teaching is very good overall. During the inspection the quality of teaching in all the lessons observed was judged to be good or better. Fifteen lessons were observed. The quality of teaching was very good or better in almost half of the lessons and in one lesson the teaching was outstanding.
6. The scrutiny made of pupils' work confirms this high standard. The quantity and quality of the written work seen in pupils' books is better than that which would normally be expected. Teaching of literacy and numeracy is particularly effective. One of the strengths in the quality of teaching is linked to the way the core subjects of English, mathematics and science are taught. The headteacher and two of the part-time teachers take responsibility for teaching one of these subjects throughout the school from reception to Year 4. This means that these three teachers can plan work for all ages and levels of abilities. There is no problem when pupils move from one year group to another because the same teacher continues to plan lessons.

7. This is a very small school with some year groups containing only two or three pupils. Therefore comparisons with the national results achieved by other schools can vary greatly from one academic year to another. However, it is clear when looking at the results over time that pupils are working well and achieving standards which are higher than those in most schools. Pupils are making good progress from the standards they had reached when joining the school.

The excellent relationships, evident between all in school, mean that pupils have excellent attitudes to their work and behave very well.

8. This is a school in which all are involved and valued. The adults and children are part of one 'family'. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are eager to tackle the work they are set. The needs of each pupil are central to the way the school is run. Pupils respond very well to this approach. They soon know that they are expected to work to the limit of their ability but also realise they are given very good support. Pupils quickly accept that this community expects them to do well. By the time they are in the older year groups the very good teaching and their own attitudes to work mean they make good progress.

Pupils' personal development is well catered for because of the school's first-rate provision for social and moral development.

9. Again, the ethos created by the school leadership means that pupils develop well and are very mature for their age when they move into the older year groups. One of the advantages of very small schools is that all pupils know each other very well. Older pupils naturally help younger ones and younger pupils benefit from seeing, daily, how older pupils behave.
10. This process happens in every aspect of school life. In assemblies, for example, an 'assembly mat' is used; all pupils sit around it and feel part of the school community. One assembly during the inspection gave some pupils the opportunity to say what was good about other pupils. They thought carefully about this question and produced comments which showed how well they were developing. For example, '... good on the computer and waits for his turn to speak in a discussion', '... doesn't just jump into a situation, thinks about it ...', and 'great to play with and good fun'.

The school works very well with the local community and other schools to enrich pupils' education and give its pupils experiences of working within larger communities.

11. There is a very close relationship between the school, the village community and the church. The school is part of two groups of local schools. This means that pupils benefit from experiences that would not be available in their own school.
12. The school is a 'Guardian' of a local National Trust location. The school uses opportunities from this link to enrich pupils' work in science, geography and art and design. They visit to look at different habitats for animals, to collect and examine natural materials and to work with National Trust staff to create willow sculptures.
13. Four 'helpers' from the village work regularly in school helping pupils to achieve their educational targets. Pupils have joined other schools in activities such as a joint trip to Holy Island. As part of a geography topic the owner of the next-door bed and breakfast establishment spoke to pupils about the way a bunkhouse for walkers and cyclists might encourage more visitors to the area.

14. The Friends of Harbottle have raised money to improve the playground of the school, and the local community have collected tokens to help the school buy books and get a free trip to the local sea-life centre. During the recent foot and mouth outbreak the tractor could not get onto the school playing field to cut the grass, so some parents brought their lawn mowers and did it themselves!

Parents have a high regard for the quality of education provided for their children and support the school very well.

15. All the evidence collected before and during the inspection showed that parents are very happy with the quality of education their children receive. Parents receive very good information about their children's progress and are particularly pleased with the newsletters which contain pupils' reports of what is happening in school.
16. Parents feel they are welcome to visit school at any time to offer help or seek information. They feel this is a school in which parents are valued and are part of the school community.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The provision the school makes for the education of pupils in the Foundation Stage.

17. The Foundation Stage has been recently introduced and, in this school, consists of the children in the nursery and the reception year. However, the nursery children spend time in this and one other school. Some activities take place in this school and some at the other one. The pupils in the reception year do not attend the other school but work with older pupils in their own school. This means that there is a possibility that some older pupils are not having experience of some of the activities linked to the Foundation Stage Curriculum. The nursery unit occupies a room at this school which has to be 'set up' each time it is used. This means that some facilities, such as trays of sand and water, are not always available. There is limited opportunity to use large-wheeled vehicles or large climbing apparatus.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

18. The governors and staff should:
- (1) look closely at the provision, at this school, for the pupils in the Foundation Stage to ensure that all pupils have experience of all the activities which are necessary for children of this age.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	15
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	17

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	6	19
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	1

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	0
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	0

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.4
National comparative data	5.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

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

The numbers of pupils taking national curriculum tests has been very small i.e. less than ten. The test results of such small numbers of pupils are not a reliable guide to the standards pupils achieve. The test results are therefore not published.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	19
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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)	2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	10
Average class size	10

Education support staff: YR – Y6

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

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	6
Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	10
Number of pupils per FTE adult	3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001 - 2002
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	£
Total income	86,682
Total expenditure	0
Expenditure per pupil	3,267
Balance brought forward from previous year	619
Balance carried forward to next year	1,176

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	0

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	19
Number of questionnaires returned	17

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	65	29	6	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	59	41	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	88	12	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	29	71	0	0	0
The teaching is good.	59	41	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	59	41	0	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	88	12	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	65	35	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	71	29	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	94	6	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	88	12	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	0	71	18	12	0